

WORKING WITH A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Rosita Tandos

Lecture at State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Syekh Nurjati Cirebon

Email: rosita.tandos@iainsyekhnujati.ac.id

KEYWORD

Multiculturalism
Multicultural Society
Religious Institutions
Community Organizing
Gender Issues

ABSTRACT

Along with the development process and globalization impact, the world recently becomes closer and inter-dependence. Responding such global situation, multiculturalism comes to offer solution for a wide range of issues associated with individual, cultural, ethnical and religious diversities. Understand this sense, multiculturalism is not an optional extra, or it is not something that society want to have it or avoid. For any societies, they need to work for manage diversity not sufficient with celebrating and acknowledging it. Then, social interventions and services at any aspects of life (social, cultural, education, economic and political) need to integrate the notion of integrity and diversity as parts of multiculturalism. This paper aims to introduce the need for understanding multiculturalism as a process that is always contextual, affecting significantly on community organizing and education programs.

INTRODUCTION

The world today is passing through a period of rapid change. Globalization might be identified by revolutionary developments of knowledge, information, and communication technology. It is a continuous process, not a static condition. Walker and Fox (1996) mentioned globalization as 'the end of geography'. This point may be reasonable as globalization brought people and nations closer together and made them interdependent as never before. The interdependency is shown from all aspects of human life.

Multicultural society is today inevitable as an impact of global development. It can be seen from the phenomenon of followers of the World's greatest religions that come to live together as one nation, or from mixed cultures that exist in the life of family, community, and society. The term of culture refers not only to what have been practiced by certain nations, races and ethnicities, also from diverse religious groups. Therefore, when scholars discuss about the issue of multicultural society, the point of religiosity is often embedded in their analysis and discussions.

On the other hand, Islam as one of religions sent by God Almighty to people of different races and nationalities teaches the humans to interact one another. From the verse, mankind has been created into many different races scattered all around the world. It has been stated in verse 107 of Surah Al-Anbiya' that the Prophet Muhammad was appointed by God Almighty to spread the world of Islam to the whole of mankind. The nature of spreading the message of Islam is

global. Now, we can find Muslim communities living in almost all parts of the world. Islam is based purely and simply on the belief in and submission to Allah, not just founded on the notion of race, nationality, political ideology or class. This reflects a global character of Islam.

Social workers and other professionals often work daily with a diverse society. Social workers are increasingly providing services to clients who have different cultural backgrounds. They work specifically for helping religious groups or diverse communities and contribute significantly to address social problems. Although members of all cultural groups have similar basic needs, the way that they conceive, perceive, and respond to the needs show considerable cross-cultural variability. The service beneficiaries' worldview, values, and beliefs can greatly affect the treatment process and outcome (Ramos & Garvin, 2003). Therefore, social work practices applying cross-cultural approaches and models are necessary to accommodate cultural variation and achieve cross-cultural applicability.

Considering the importance of multi-cultural understanding and its impact to the life of society, this paper provide a comprehensive discussion focusing on a multicultural society seeing from Islamic perspective and social welfare framework. The first session begin with the explanation of problems that will be discussed throughout all parts of this paper. The second session discusses a multicultural society in the views of Islam. The third provides discussions of debates and challenges of multiculturalism, followed by the fourth that provide analysis of the future actions for helping a multicultural society. Then, this paper will end with a conclusion on the issue of working with a multicultural society.

This paper was developed from extensive review of top journals in information technology, social media, and research method literature. The author also used other online data such as web-based pages analysis (Granello and Wheaton, 2004) to identify the current phenomenon of social media use among Muslims in Indonesia. The analysis of social media mainly focus on current social media usage such as in education, dakwah and other social aspects. Meanwhile, the analysis of information teknologi and social media literature focus on how the social media sites were used in various studies (qualitative and quantitative). For example, how the content analysis (such as texts, foto, dicussions, postings) and observation (users) were practiced in social media research. Some advantages of the use of social media as research settings were also extracted from the literature. Research method literature reviews was aimed to broaden understanding of various approaches used in qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis. This analisis was also used to show how researchers may benefit from the use of social media in their research. The outcome of the analysis was presented to show how social media can be applied in Islamic education institutions research contexts.

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For a social worker including those who work in the field of community development, understanding multiculturalism is necessary to gain broader understanding of the reality within the profession. It also helps obtain an opportunity for personal and professional growth. Therefore, this study focuses on the issue of working with a multicultural driven by four main questions. The questions will be answered by applying Islamic perspective and social welfare framework or community organizing and development approach. The questions are described as follows: 1) What is the discussion of multicultural society concept? 2) What are challenges and debates on multiculturalism? 3) How do religious institutions play their roles in a multicultural society? And 4) What are future actions to help diverse communities?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Discussion of A Multicultural Society Concept

Multiculturalism has been described as a “movement .. whose goal is to elevate and celebrate diverse ethnic backgrounds (Johnson, 2000). Multiculturalism as a concept is both challenging and provocative. Responses to multiculturalism include social status and placement within society, availability and distribution of resources, and political acceptance or rejection to the concept (Diaz, 2005). Then, multiculturalism emphasizes the acknowledging the existence of ethnic diversity and ensuring the rights of individuals to retain their cultures. This should be followed by acknowledging the rights of individuals and groups, and reducing pressure and social conflicts based on disadvantage and inequality (UNESCO, 1995).

In fact, every society or community has its own way to live in peace and harmony, particularly for the society that consist of diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultures. This can be seen from the life of Indonesian people that has been strongly rooted in history as multicultural societies. One of cultural characteristics is reflecting from religious practices. According to Azra (2010), Islam in Indonesia is similar with Islam in Southeast Asia that possesses a number of distinctive characters due to its different historical, social, cultural and political realities.

Diversity can be source of strength and success of a society although to unite all different communities require more commitment and effort to gain it. For some, the concept of multiculturalism may be ideologically distinct from integration, but in social practice the process of multiculturalism often do require some implementation of policies of integration at some level (Nye, 2007). The next part of this paper explains the concept of integration of society in Islamic perspective and how it goes along the history of Islam.

Islamic perspective on integration of society

The Prophet Muhammad showed the example of a peaceful multicultural society during his lifetime. Muslims, Jewish, Christians, Magian, and Sabian were the communities that bonded

together under one constitution which generally reduces various understandings in many different contexts (Hamisan, et al). Moreover, the situation at that time also was colored by multi cultures and values practiced by various tribes and nations. Then we can learn from the history of how the society has been integrated, starting in Madinah al-Nabiyy (city of The Prophet Muhammad) or well-known as Madinah al-Munawwarah (a radiant city).

Integration can be defined as “the extent to which an individual experiences a sense of belonging to a social group or collectivity by virtue of sharing norms, values, beliefs, etc., which is widely used in various areas (Jary & Jary, 1991). It is also used to depict action or process of integrating economic, politics (Pearsall, 1998), social and education. Integration aims at mutual recognition of group differences for eliminating barriers and impediments that are based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability and age. Then, the concept of integration of society is widely used especially in a plural society that contains diverse and different cultures and backgrounds (Hamisan, et al).

In Islam, the concept of integrated society was introduced in the Holy Qur’an (Al-Hujurat:13). From this verse, it is stated clearly that the existence of different pairs, nations and tribes is not a problem, but it is a sign to make them know, connect, and integrate each other. This diversity reflects the greatness of God, not showing superiority of one nation, race, color, or language over another. Humans are created differently as creations of God Almighty (Ar-Rum:22; Al-Hujurat:13). Islam rejects any quarrels and disputes among people in society, especially among religious believers. Islam is a religion that maintains peaceful coexistence and integration within a society by putting disputes aside and emphasizing more on the concept of unity and brotherhood (Al-Anfaal: 46).

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad mentioned in his hadith “ The man who is the most hateful to God is the one who quarrels and disputes most ”(Al-Bukhari, 1998). The Prophet Muhammad did not keep silent about the importance of unity and the danger of division in the society (Abi Daud, 1999). He also gave a serious warning to the people who try to harm any society or community (Muslim, 2003; An-Nasaie, 2002), and emphasizes that the closer man to his God is the one who protected the prosperity of the society (Al-Bukhari, 1998). Regarding the concept of brotherhood, the Prophet explained that brotherhood is not based on faith only, but it is a part and element of the faith. He highlights that Allah is fulfilling the need of a person who willingly fulfill the need of his brothers (Al-Bukhari, 1998).

The scholars have concerns on the concept of the integration of society. For example, Al-Mawdudi (1982) states that this concept of integrated society is directly and indirectly promoted in Islam since Islam is the only system of life that considers the entire mankind to be a family, binds humans into a fraternity, and establishes a world society or community called Ummah. Watt (1991) acknowledge the distinctive marks of Islam, compared with other religions, are the diversity of people who embrace it and a strong feeling of brotherhood and a measure of harmony.

Then, the Prophet Muhammad has shown the importance of integration of society, emphasizing the honor of being different and diverse at that particular time as the perfect reference for mankind, especially Muslims who live in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. All the efforts in developing Madinan society in terms of social, cultures, economic, and politics should be good example to be practiced in all countries. The guidance left by the Prophet is sufficient for Muslims and non-Muslims, which can help to create or maintain connectedness and cohesiveness for living peacefully together.

Debates and Challenges of Multiculturalism: This is The Issue

A multicultural society might be identified from visible cultural and religious diversity. Multiculturalism exists or happens continuously as globalization force people to move, migrate, and be dependent each other. An important starting point for the discussion of multiculturalism is to distinguish three different primary understanding of multiculturalism concept that refers to an ideology, a social issue, and/or the academic study of multiculturalism (Nye, 2007). This study aims to elaborate all of these points of multiculturalism, while emphasizing more on multiculturalism as a social issue and for the purpose of academic analysis to gaining a comprehensive analysis of multiculturalism and future actions for a multicultural society.

Debates of multiculturalism and challenges to enhance multiculturalism are explained by reflecting from some parts of the world. There have been considerable debates in recent year around the world arguing about the 'death of multiculturalism', as some people hesitate for the concept to address issues in society. Nye (2007) mentioned that in the United Kingdom (UK) such debates influenced by a common link between perceived 'failure' of multicultural policy and the presence of a substantial Muslim minority population in many of the European and North American societies. This debate could be extended to analyze the issue of multiculturalism in a predominantly moderate Muslim majority context such as in Indonesia and Malaysia. In both countries, policies have been considered successful in developing a common national identity and relative inter-communal harmony.

Many of the contemporary debates, particularly in Western Europe and North America on how multiculturalism can be considered as common ground or explored to address issues such as language, identity, dress code, and values. Nye (2007) concluded that the debates are likely to re-evaluate the term of multiculturalism to have a major relevance to the world in which we live now. She added that a clearly education is a very significant place for the development of such common ground, and the educational systems have to contribute positively in all sectors of society.

On the other hand, intolerance and injustice are considered as challenges multiculturalism. Firstly, intolerance might be shown in form of actions such as taking the extreme form of killing biologically or socially (marginalization) other cultures. To address intolerance is by improving tolerance that will open for a world of (dominant) nation states or culture/s to create peaceful coexistence and for human rights inside the states or protect minorities.

Establishing dialogue among people based on mutual respect and curiosity is needed to enhance active peaceful coexistence. People might see each other and learn other cultures and differences as sources of mutual enrichment. This step is called as engaging across differences (Baumann, 1999; Turner, 1993). It requires participation of all components of society in attempts to challenge context of diversity, learning about and tolerant with other's differences, and engage across the differences.

Secondly, injustice is another challenge for enhancing multiculturalism. The domination of certain group/s is easily lead to frustration and angry of marginalized groups. Justice in Islam is similar to the universal concept of justice, which means to be fair and just or placing something in its rightful place. All demands Muslims to be fair and just, including in their treatment of the Non-Muslims at any aspects of life.

Actually, understanding multiculturalism is not just about celebrating diversity or having a positive attitude to the differences between cultures and groups. It asks for many efforts to deal with challenges that such differences present in society at the level of national politics and state management. Reflecting to this point, Hall (2000) goes on to argue that the term 'multiculturalism'

describes the strategies and policies adopted to govern and manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multicultural societies throw up.

At the government affairs, there should not be inquisition under the administration as shown previously by the History of the Islamic Spain that give equal opportunity to access education. The learning and teaching process joined by Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Nowadays, good multiculturalism involves more active governance interventions supported by the state and its agents or institutions. The interventions need clear policies (produced at the levels of executive, legislative, and Judicative) of integration, the promotion of toleration, engagement and working among diverse communities.

Roles of Religious Institutions in A Multicultural Society

The number of Muslims in the global population increases dramatically year by year. It is reported by Pew Research Institute that Muslim the current number of Indonesian population is about 220 Million of which 87.21%, followed by Christians (6.61%), Hindus (1.83%), other religions (1.03%) and spiritual groups (0.31%) respectively. Recently, there are six official religions recognized in Indonesia. They are Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Therefore, religious believers especially Indonesian Muslims are expected to lead for building tolerance, networks and any other efforts to solve social problems, not solely limited their work on the issue of religiosity.

Amstrong (2006) states that there is a symbiotic relationship between religion and contemporary politics: each influences and exacerbates each other. Religious scriptures (the Jewish, the new Testament, and the Qur'an) all contain passages that can and have been used by extremists to justify violence and intolerance. On the other hand, fundamentalism sometimes takes the form of 'religious patriotism', replacing the 19th century European model of nationalism with one based on religion (Amstrong, 2006). It often starts with what is perceived as to be an assault by the secularizing or liberalizing sectors of society including religious practices. The fundamentalism and extremism often express fears and anxieties that no society can safely ignore.

However, attacking religious extremists is counter-productive. Such action just can make this group more extreme and threaten other groups in society. Religious concepts such as Jihad and Takfir should be re-interpret and understand in more productive meanings rather than destructive and harmful to other people or groups (Umar, 2013). Furthermore, Amstrong (2006) added that all religions were all rooted in a disciplined rejection of violence and promote the ideals of compassion, justice and respect for the sacred rights of the individual (Amstrong, 2006). Therefore, religious believers have crucial position and responsibility to create unity and harmony in society.

Learning from the Indonesian history, for example, some conflicts were driven by religious issues although it is not the only factor of the conflicts. Issues such as social suspiciousness, mistrust, religious and ethnical conflicts can be easily misled by certain groups to raise conflict and riots in society. The next part provides a comprehensive analysis of social issues that possibly emerge a multicultural society and how to address the issue by implementing concepts and frameworks deprived from social welfare perspective that contains social interventions at the levels of individual, family, group, communities, organization and policies. For the purpose of this paper, the analysis is focused more on intervention at mezzo (community and organization) and macro levels (public policies), but provide a brief discussion on micro practices (available for individual, family and group).

Future Actions for Helping Diverse Communities

This part begins with the discussion of challenges of Dakwah. The term is deprived from Arabic language that means calling to Islam or an active proselytism (Taib, 2012). At Islamic Higher Education, Dakwah refers to a faculty that offers several study programs. One of the programs is Islamic Community Development that enhances the coverage of Dakwah into more extensive community programs to creating fundamental changes in multicultural and multi-religious society. In Indonesia, religious institutions and organizations have participated in development processes including social, cultural, economic, education, and political sectors. The programs conducted by the Islamic institutions have targeted not only Muslim population, but also non-Muslims. This might be seen from Islamic universities that open study programs for all people. Similarly, Islamic hospitals offer services to all patients. Such effort can improve the professionalism and service quality as the institutions work with diverse backgrounds of service beneficiaries.

Dakwah for Social Changes: Enhancing The Paradigm

Changing paradigm of Dakwah from a conventional and normative activity of calling people to Islam into more advanced and transformative efforts. This new paradigm may influence the discussion of Dakwah as one of Islamic sciences. Furthermore, is necessary to cover all aspects of Dakwah bil-lisan (by communication), bil-hal (by actions), and bil-qalb (by personal commitment). With such progressive change, could possibly enhance the roles of Muslims or Islamic institutions and organizations for creating significant changes.

As far as the development process concerned, religious institutions in Indonesia have provided actively social interventions, assistances, and services for helping their followers or others. Program aiming to eliminating poverty and hunger, or to increase welfare need to invite and involve people from different backgrounds. For instance, Islamic banking offers Hibah fund to conduct community development programs. Additionally, organizations such as LAZIS and Dompot Duafa that manage zakah, infaq, and sadaqah have conducted community empowerment and development programs such as working with people to access clean water, paddy seeds and irrigation, and public health services.

At international level, several faith-based organizations (FBOs) around the world create an organization at the levels of local, national, and international. The organizations function effectively since they have fundamental social capital (trust, human resources, infrastructures, and fund). For instance, FBOs in the United States have participated actively in distributing social assistances and services to the needy or eligible persons. The services such providing daily needs, conducting educational program and health service besides play their main duty to fulfill people's religiosity need. The institutions usually work with immigrants or low-income individuals and family. The fund of such programs is from Federal and/or States Governments budget allocated for welfare benefits (Dinitto, 2000; Gilbert & Terrel, 2005; Stone, 2005).

Education for Improving Multiculturalism

Implementing multiculturalism often refers to a place of intersection of a number of social justice and human rights issues. For instance, violence against women is often called as an example of cultural phenomena supported by patriarchal system. Women's obedience and main responsibilities in domestic sphere are values practiced by the majority cultures, justified by religious understandings that gender bias. Moreover, religions like Islam are often accused for allowing violence by men against women. Therefore, learning religious teaching comprehensively and promote multiculturalism might end such misperception since violence against women can

happened anywhere and anytime by anyone. Then, the issue is not about the religion, but how to create effective policies to protect women's rights and social justice.

Change educational system means to extend the roles of educational institutions for respecting and acknowledging differences emerge in the life of communities. The universities and schools are key instruments to raise people awareness, and address needs of students who have diverse cultural and religious backgrounds (Lawson, 2010; Nye, 2007). In addition, educational institutions also need to address other specific needs of students in terms of disability, financial constraint, family condition, gender issue, etc.. These all points could affect significantly to the achievement and performance of students in class, which might be experienced differently by students.

To achieve desirable outcome of education such as improving student's academic performance and quality of learning and teaching process, the educational institutions need to improve the cultural competence contract. It helps students acquire skills for developing: 1) cultural knowledge of some group, 2) self-knowledge, and 3) application of the knowledge (Gutierrez & Alvarez, 2000). To develop cultural knowledge, students are encouraged to pursue learning through many avenues, including some that are not traditionally academic. For example, students may learn about the group by attending events (such as religious occasions), reading novels or magazines, and using other media such as movie, videos, or television (Green, 1995; Gutierrez & Alvarez, 2000). Then, to gain self-knowledge and learning the implication of the knowledge, students need to critically assess their involvement with the group they selected, and then assess what would be their strengths and opportunities, as well as their obstacles and challenges. Final step of learning process for raising cultural awareness is to set plan of action project. It is based on group work, which student are clustered around interests and access to appropriate projects, and time is provided to form the group and develop their project. Students may involve in community organizing activity to develop and expand their relationship with diverse groups (Gutierrez & Alvarez, 2000). Such action plan has main purpose to connect students with the real world, within challenges and opportunities inherent in multicultural work.

Multicultural Community Organizing Practice

As mentioned previously, the failure to develop the context of multiculturalism effectively could cause disruption and violence in society. This might be because the state (or part of the state) do not wish to stop the unexpected conditions, and would prefer conflict rather than peaceful management of differences. In other words, the focus point is to make conflict manageable and ensure social justice and protection to all members of society.

Cultural characteristics such as religious practices or distinctive style of dress identify members of particular ethnic or religious communities. Cultural identifiers also include rules that govern marriage and other forms of social relation and connection that affect the boundaries separating people of different ethnicities (Nye, 2007). Such diversity has to address when working with multicultural communities. According to Diaz (2005) social workers should respect various values of diversity and promote cultural competent towards differences among people and cultural groups.

Ramos and Garvin (2003) explained that in conducting a social intervention, social workers have to select a system level that influence of the client's community and social milieu in causing or maintaining targeted problems. For instance, a female migrant domestic worker who wants to work overseas are affected by her family, especially her husband and parents, agency and middleman that sent her overseas and recruited her.

Another example is related to religious life experienced by Muslim students in Islamic boarding schools tend to follow or obey their Kyai (great teacher), friends who live together with them, mosque, and their parents. To implement a program aims to improve these groups' sense of

multiculturalism, social workers have to be consistent with empowerment practice. They must consider the various system levels in order to mobilize resources, advocate for clients, and work with partners or collaterals.

Additionally, it is important to take into account the clients' cultural norms and expectations regarding the treatment. Many Asian place less emphasize on self-reliance and rely more on the supports of their family and community, promoting interdependence rather than independency. For some Asian groups, their long-standing traditions of respect and authority make interactions among family members both limited and prescribed (Sharf, 2000). It is also important to respect in recognition leadership role of elders who have recognized for their lifelong accomplishments and contributions to the family and community (Weaver and Wodarski, 1996). Such realities of social values and norms might be still found in many families and communities in Indonesia.

Community-organizing programs in a country like Indonesia need to emphasize the importance of togetherness and collectiveness. For instance, it is common in community organizing programs to use key persons who can help to community or groups that are in ethnical or religious conflict. The key persons might be the religious or community leaders. However, the steps of intervention should ensure all people's participation unless the conflict will be on the hand of those who hold the power.

The failure to establish and/or maintain participation of all elements of the two ethnic or religious groups will possibly affect the success of the program. People-centered development approach could work to improve sense of multiculturalism of the people. Intercultural conflict should be managed as it may reflect other differences of power, income, wealth, education and access to resources (Hesse, 2000).

To end the discussion of effective community organizing, specific issues such as gender inequality and injustice should also be integrated in the analysis of working with a multicultural society. Let starts with a case of an abused wife who prefers to be silent for maintaining harmony in her family. Assumption such as being abused is solely to show husband's love to his wife, or cultural value that says it is regarded as unacceptable to tell people outside the family that might reflect negatively on the family. In transnational domestic work, such meanings are still applied. The obedience of female migrant domestic workers is kept emphasizing by the agencies before they sending overseas. Statements like "Don't be ashamed your country" or "You are the hero of your family and your country" often impose the women into terrible condition (Anggreini, 2005; Silvey, 2003, 2004).

They prefer to stay in violated and isolated conditions with lack of facilities to support their social and individual life. Therefore, the future actions or interventions are expected to consider the backgrounds of female domestic workers who are closed to their families, friends and groups. They should be allowed to make social interaction and develop their knowledge and skills to be professional domestic workers who can face any cultural environment in which they work with. The stakeholders - female workers, governments of sending and receiving workers, private sectors that offer services (e.g. health insurance, travel and banking), agencies who recruit and send them overseas, employers and family at home- are supposed to work hand in hand to create health and safe workplace. Lastly, the collaboration of all stakeholders of transnational domestic business need to be involved and comprehended to solve the daily problems examined by female domestic workers. This point of collaboration might be implemented to address any types of social problems to enhance future policies and programs helping those who are disadvantaged by oppressive condition, inequality, and injustice.

CONCLUSSION

A society needs the best preference as a guideline to live in harmony and peace. The prophet Muhammad provided notable example to his companions for establishing brotherhood, promoting justice, preserving equality and living peacefully condition with communities or group that differ in their religious or cultural backgrounds. Then, Muslims and other religious believers should open their eyes and hearts for differences, applying multiculturalism. Instead of sensing danger when somebody is different let us be filled with the joy at the opportunity to learn, to enrich, and be enriched with comprehensive knowledge and experiences of diverse cultures and social settings. On the other hand, social workers and other professionals must have a lifelong dedication to increasing knowledge and sensitivity to major multicultural groups, by learning and respecting their values, customs, world views, political history and contributions to humanity.

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