Multiculturalism and identity politics: Reading on the Religious Harmony Forum

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Abstract: This study looks into identity politics locally, with an emphasis on the role played by religious groups—such as the Religious Harmony Forum (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragaman/FKUB)—in promoting multiculturalism as a countermeasure to the growth of identity politics. The study's focus is the Kerinci Regency in Jambi, Indonesia, and it looks at how identity politics and diversity are positioned within the larger Indonesian framework. The research selectively chooses informants, such as the FKUB, the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), traditional leaders, and religious figures, using qualitative methods like observation, interviews, and document examination. Results show that a variety of political identification patterns exist across the country according to societal culture, resources, and sociopolitical circumstances. As a result, the FKUB responds with a variety of strategies and tactics. The study also emphasizes how the discourse-centric perspective on multiculturalism hinders its ability to effectively counter identity politics. The research points up difficulties that stand in the way of achieving diversity, such as the consolidation and contestation of identity within Islam. Interfaith conflicts, however, show a downward trend and provide a more nuanced picture of the intricate relationship between identity politics and multiculturalism in Indonesia at the local level.

Keywords: identity politics; interfaith dialogue; multiculturalism; Kerinci; religious harmony forum

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A. Introduction

Identity politics is a challenge to Indonesia's plurality and can potentially create national disintegration (Bland, 2019). Unprochial and unfaithful political pragmatism has opened up space for horizontal conflict on a wide scale. Claims of identity that involve ethnicity, political ideology, and religion (Maarif et al., 2010) are more intensely accommodated in the power struggle. Identity politics further complicate the realization of multiculturalism, which has been developing only at the level of discourse.

Identity as a predictor in political contestation (Muhtadi, 2018) has encouraged politicians to mobilize the masses and strengthen their influence (Purwoko, 2016; Schäfer, 2014). The identity base makes political fights more irrational and uncompromising. Religion is the most prominent base of political identity (Staquf, 2020). The flow of identity politics has penetrated the regions through the wave of social media and its potentially divisive consequences (Chakrabarti, 2018). Politicians and religious and indigenous actors are also involved in consolidating identity politics.

The study of identity politics and its relevance to multiculturalism has two important meanings. First, in the local context it is a rereading of policy schemes that have not been able to solve the adverse effects of identity politics. Second, such study is essential to position multiculturalism based on a local or regional perspective, so that the realization of its idea does not contradict culture and society.

This study was conducted in Kerinci Regency, Jambi, Indonesia. Customary and religious norms are central in the Kerinci community, including in the government sector (Efyanti et al., 2017; Maulana et al., 2021). The strengthening of identity politics has had a significant impact on the position of customs and religion in society, which has shifted their ideal functions towards politics. In other words, the widespead practice of 'identity manipulation' caused by national political tendencies and information disruption (Purwoko, 2016) has transformed indigenous and religious functions in a counterproductive direction.

The involvement of religious, social organizations, such as the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), is considered essential to reduce identity politics that have the potential to trigger vertical and horizontal conflicts (Rahman & Wahab, 2019). FKUB can facilitate interfaith and ethnic dialogue and spread the idea of multiculturalism by involving various elements of society.

A series of dialogues initiated by FKUB with the theme of multiculturalism, moderation, and tolerance can be considered as anticipatory efforts in the fight against identity politics, intolerance, and other negative impacts. The public can

understand the significance of multiculturalism through dialogue. In dialogue there is a process of content integration, which provides a holistic understanding of a culture. Furthermore, knowledge construction will be formed to identify the influence of its biases, perspectives, and assumptions. Therefore, social interaction can reduce prejudice, scapegoating, stereotypes, and discrimination caused by identity politics.

To date, study of the FKUB has tended to focus on its regulative role, rather than associating it with a broader contextual discourse. The issues of harmony, tolerance, and multiculturalism advocated by FKUB are always read with a static and parochial approach. The lack of attention to the cutting-edge political dimension is often the trigger for social division and horizontal conflict. Previous studies have paid much attention to the significance of FKUB in affirming the spirit of harmony and tolerance (Ferdian et al., 2018; Harudin et al., 2020; Ismail et al., 2020; Latifah et al., 2019; Makalew et al., 2021; Nuryani & Taufiq, 2019); conflict resolution (Fahmi, 2019); and its role in countering radicalism (Jajuri & Rahmat, 2021).

From the themes identified in previous research, further study of identity politics that involves adverse implications for harmony and multiculturalism is needed. The widespread practice of identity politics has pushed religious, religious and social rganizations into a central position in order to anticipate the adverse effects of such political trends.

This study explains the patterns of identity politics at the national and local levels and analyzes the response of religious organizations, especially FKUB, in order to identity political trends. It is based on three arguments: first, the need to intensify the role of FKUB and its relation to identity politics, which generally is not responded to professionally by social and religious institutions in the region; secondly, the low management of multiculturalism-based conflicts at the local level; and third, the lack of collaboration between institutions in promulgating the notion of multiculturalism in society.

B. Methods

The research was conducted in Kerinci, Jambi, Indonesia. The majority of Kerinci people are Muslim, who have a variety of forms of cultural wisdom and customs. It is qualitative research, in which the primary data were collected from stakeholder responses regarding multiculturalism in the midst of identity politics trends. Data were also collected through observation, interviews and a document review. The informants were selected using a purposive sampling approach based on certain criteria. Therefore, the informants were directly related and played an important

role, and included representatives from the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) and the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), together with traditional and religious leaders.

The study was conducted in several stages. The first stage was to formulate the main research questions. Second, data collection was undertaken through unstructured in-depth interviews. These were conducted naturally and did not follow a strict structure. This method was intended to build a friendly atmosphere between the researcher and informants and to avoid any suspicion. The interview approach involved the judgment sampling method, in which informants gave instructions about the suitability of the other informants. This method was also used to obtain validity between the answers of one informant and others. During the interview, reflection activities were continuously performed. The type of observation used was non-participant observation, in which researchers are not directly involved and act only as independent observers. In this case, the researcher observed how patterns of identity politics occur and investigated the practice of harmony and tolerance in the Kerinci community. Researchers record, analyze and then make conclusions about the observed behavior of the subjects.

The data analysis technique involved a thematic analysis approach over several stages, namely data collection, reduction, interpretation and display. All the information was recorded and transcribed. The reduction stage is the process of identifying raw data, which are sorted and summarized, coded and categorized based on the research questions. Furthermore, an interpretive thematic analysis approach was used by carefully understanding the complete interview transcript by rereading it several times. The interpretive thematic analysis approach aims to obtain important patterns or ideas that appear repeatedly in the actual data. Moreover, such analysis requires deep interpretation and understanding by the researcher (Given, 2008; Peterson, 2017).

C. Results and Discussion

Identity Politics and Religious Harmony

Identity politics is taking place in many democratic countries; it is a new kind of politics characterized by the rise of angry citizens and populism (Besley & Persson, 2021). Such politics is increased significantly by the spreading of fake news (hoaxes) and hate speech. In the Indonesian context, the use of identity has increased sharply since the 2019 general election. Polarization in post-election society also strengthens identity politics (Hanan, 2020), which many people use for political and commercial purposes.

This type of politics applies at the national and the regional level. The practice of identity politics, that was initially oriented to dominate the bureaucratic sector, has been manipulated for political purposes. The identity of religious groups is the most dominant component which is politicized. Because every religious group has a solid basis for claiming its determinant role in the practical political sector, this is seen as an opportunity for politicians to seize influence and mobilize the masses (Purwoko, 2016). However, the mainstreaming of such identities completely ignores the spirit of multiculturalism (Nisa, 2018). Exclusivism and discrimination have increased dramatically in the public sphere, so the realization of multiculturalism has been challenged in society.

Identity politics that occurs on a national scale shows differences in patterns and orientation, which are determined by the people's characteristics, resources and background in certain areas. Such politics is more often accommodated in political contestation than in inhomogeneous societies (Muhtadi, 2018). In addition to political orientation, identity politics is also synonymous with economic and religious orientation (Kambo, 2018; Setiawan et al., 2020). Its practice is situational to the typical society, resources and social dynamics.

The patterns of identity politics faced by FKUB at the national level determine the approach to dialogue, socialization and recommendations made in the community. The diversity of identity and problems in each region requires FKUB to adjust its policies and programs. FKUB Jakarta, for example, as the capital of the country, is a gathering place for many people from various regions. The challenges of FKUB Jakarta are certainly more complex than those in other regions. In addition, there has been an escalation of the politicization of religion in recent years, causing polarization in society. Therefore, FKUB tends to be flexible in performing its tasks and functions in line with the problems and character of society.

In undertaking its duties, FKUB Jakarta is faced with two types of challenge: external and internal. External challenges include cultural and ethnic ones, and religious diversity in society, while internal ones include members with inappropriate qualifications or a lack of competence in conflict management, and unpreparedness to face socio-political dynamics (Fahmi, 2019). These challenges are obstacles in responding to identity politics marked by diverse and dynamic patterns. A similar situation is experienced by several other FKUB, such as FKUB Jayapura, FKUB Manado, FKUB Medan, FKUB Pasaman, and FKUB Salatiga. In general, such internal problems are caused by the recruitment process of FKUB members, which is based only on the recommendations of community organizations.

FKUB commonly uses dialogue and socialization to normalize religious and social conditions and strengthen the spirit of religious harmony. The dialogue approach is considered capable of accommodating various perspectives to preserve the idea of multiculturalism. As Sleeter (2018) emphasizes, the idea of multiculturalism should rest on dialogue in which the groups with the most power learn to listen to and collaborate with those with less power. The effort involves identifying principles, values and practices that can be realized in all professional arenas oriented toward social justice (Shannon-Baker, 2018). The involvement of interfaith and cultural figures largely determines the effectiveness of dialogue in the context of neutralizing the use of identity for political gain. In addition, as the experience of FKUB Jakarta shows, the effectiveness of dialogue is also related to its theme and approach. It generally uses a one-model approach and is too theoretical, not accommodating lower society as actors and a group that directly impacts policy.

FKUB Jayapura can be seen as an example of an initiator of interfaith dialogue that plays a vital role in reducing identity conflicts that have been prolonged. The faith-based conflict that occurred in Jayapura was managed by opening a dialogue room so that the community could accept the change in a positive direction (Fisher, 2001). The experience of FKUB Jayapura proves that coordination and communication between religious and community leaders is a defensive effort against the practice of identity politics (Amirullah et al., 2022) .

FKUB Medan has had similar experiences in facing a pluralistic society. The potential for conflict is great amid a diversity of identities, especially in political moments. The implications are significant for religious harmony in Medan City. The production of hate speech and hoaxes during political celebrations triggered wider conflict. In addition, conflict has also been caused by the accumulation of social sentiments, such as the issue of houses of worship and provocative religious leaders (Wikanda et al., 2020). Through political contestation, identity-based sentiments are articulated and channeled.

This is unlike the case of FKUB Manado; although Manado people are known to be heterogeneous, the potential for identity-based conflicts can be appropriately managed. Naturally, Manado city was included in the top 10 most tolerant or most harmonious cities in Indonesia in 2020. FKUB Manado plays a vital role in initiating communication spaces between various groups. The benefits are significant in maintaining harmonization and harmony between religious adherents. For example, in the case of the Khairiah Mosque land dispute in 2016, FKUB Manado conducted intense coordination with stakeholders so that social conflicts could be avoided (Makalew et al., 2021). Its experience shows that social harmony can be realized through interpersonal and group communication (Hamdani AG, 2015).

Coordination is a preventive measure to address the adverse effects of identity politics. According to Okhuysen and Bechky (2009), strengthening coordination can align individuals in a collective effort towards achieving a particular goal. It is also the focus of attention of FKUB West Pasaman and FKUB Salatiga in anticipating social conflict and identity politics. The house of worship dispute that occurred in 2014 in Kinali, West Pasaman, was able to be resolved by the West Pasaman FKUB through coordination efforts with religious leaders, community leaders, and the government (Ferdian et al., 2018). Similarly, FKUB Salatiga has made coordination efforts through interfaith dialogue that involved religious figures, regional leaders, and representatives of community organizations (Nuryani & Taufiq, 2019).

Identity politics trends at the regional level are responded to differently by FKUB but are substantively and operationally very similar. Strengthening coordination and dialogue is a common strategy taken by FKUB as a preventive measure. Nevertheless, the role of FKUB is still limited to prevention efforts rather than transforming conflict (Fisher, 2001). It is less likely to be ready to manage identity-based conflicts in a more constructive direction.

FKUB Kerinci, Jambi has also experienced the same dilemma, and religious-based conflict management has not been able to deal with the root of the problem. Conflict resolution tends to be reactive and sporadic. On the other hand, Islam as the majority group has a great influence in hardening the identity politics that develops in society. In other words, the interests of the majority have always been an obstacle for FKUB in prioritizing constitutional tools, especially in counteracting identity politics.

Mapping Patterns of Identity Politics and the Significance of Multiculturalism

Geographically, Kerinci is divided into three regions: Kerinci Hulu, Kerinci Tengah and Kerinci Hilir. Kerinci Hulu includes Semurup, Siulak and Kayu Aro; Central Kerinci comprises Belui, Sungai Liuk, Rawang, Kumun, and Sungai Penuh; and Kerinci Hilir consists of Tanjung Pauh, Semerap, Pulau Tengah, Pulang Sangkar and Tamiai.

Although under one government, the three regions have different social structures, demographic characteristics, and cultural and religious backgrounds. Kerinci Hulu is more heterogeneous than Kerinci Hilir in terms of culture and religion. Nevertheless, Kerinci Hulu, Kerinci Tengah and Kerinci Hilir's clan identity (hamlets) have been implemented in various situations and social conditions.

The identity of the clan, which should be the capital for the strengthening of social cohesion, was used in some contexts for counterproductive purposes, thus triggering conflicts between hamlet communities. Some of the social conflicts that occurred were in Kumun and Tanjung Pauh Mudik (2014), Tamia and Barung Pulau (2017), Sleman and Pendung Talang Genting (2018), and Semerap and Muak (2020).

In addition, the hardening of Hulu and Hilir identities has been raised at various moments; for example, in political contests, ranging from regional head elections (pilkada), legislative elections (pileg), and village head elections (pilkades). From the observations, the election of village heads (pilkades) was more likely to trigger social conflicts than regional and legislative elections due to the kinship (kalbu) in the Kerinci community, which usually strengthened significantly in village political events.

In political events, the identity of the kalbu was also a determining factor in all aspects of society. The determination of Khatib and Bilal' Id Fitri, the appointment of village officials, and the sacrificial committee ('Id Adha) were among the examples that showed that the identity of the kalbu was very central in the Kerinci community. The mainstreaming of the identity of the kalbu was intended to maintain social status and prestige. Below is an excerpt of the interview with the informant:

> "Kalbu is very decisive social statu, in the field of religion and government. Like choosing Eid Fitr officers and BPD (Village Consultative Board) members, kalbu is very concerned." (I1, Interview, January 5, 2022).

Kalbu (customary) existence is more dominant than the local government, so the kalbu identity is vulnerable to being politicized in order to seize influence and mass (Yusuf & Effendi, 2021). It is not uncommon to provoke conflict and social friction to some extent. Superior actors such as indigenous figures and religious people actively legitimize that identity (Efyanti et al., 2017). Indigenous and religious power was distributed through traditional ceremonies and religious pulpits. The intensity was increasingly visible in political moments, as confirmed by the chairman of the Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) of Kerinci Regency:

> "Religious figures and indigenous figures have a big stage in the political season. They have the social capital to direct the community. It often causes friction in the community. Our job is to socialize and warn." (I2, Interview, January 23, 2022).

Massive politicization of the identity of the kalbu has occurred in Kerinci Hilir region, while Kerinci Hulu, especially Kayu Aro, has prioritized religious identity, tradition and ethnicity because it is the most heterogeneous and multicultural Kerinci area. From the observations, four ethnicities inhabit the area: Batak, Java,

Kerinci and Minang. The religious traditions/organizations that developed there include LDII, MTA, Salafi-Wahabi, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Jamaah Tabligh, Jamaah Tarekat, and Sapta Darma (*kejawen*).

The diversity that existed in Kayu Aro did not necessarily trigger horizontal conflict. The potential for conflict could be suppressed by promoting collective values, cultural wisdom and mutual respect. Cultural instruments were placed as binders of social solidarity and cultural protection against destructive interests. In other words, the Kayu Aro community showed that the spirit of multiculturalism was vital capital for reducing and minimizing identity politics. Nevertheless, the implementation of multiculturalism in Kayu Aro was not without obstacles, with barriers in the form of the divergence of religious group sentiments. As a majority representation, traditional Islam dealt with exclusive religious groups, such as Salafi-Wahabi, MTA, and LDII.

Opposition to the majority religious groups was due to the rejection of the Salafi-Wahabi group of, in particular, local traditions. The purification motivation of the group has created contradictions in society. Symbolic violence was displayed using the terms bid'ah and takfiri in religious pulpits. In addition, Salafi-Wahabi groups distributed their identities through majlis taklim, educational institutions, and tahfidz houses (pesantren/rumah tahfidz).

It received a severe response from traditional Islamic groups, especially Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which presented comparison narratives. The counter-narrative effort also involved preachers outside Kerinci, such as Habib (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad), invited from Java and around Jambi. They were seen as having religious influence and authority, and expected to be able to confirm the character of traditional Islam, the principle of Rahmatan Lil' Alamin, and avoid social conflict. Through Habib, the idea of multiculturalism is confirmed, for example by reducing adverse claims or prejudice against different groups. Such efforts can reduce misconceptions among groups in society and develop positive feelings about different groups (Arslan & Raţă, 2013).

Multicultural agents such as religious leaders, community leaders, educators, and government officials play an essential role in presenting content integration of various cultures and groups. As Syed Hasyim Ali (1999) affirms, content integration articulates that no single understanding can represent the whole reality. In addition, the ability of religious leaders to understand the essential dimensions contained in religion is the main requirement for realizing interfaith harmony (Safitri et al., 2022).

Later, people's experiences of the devastating effects of identity politics and social conflicts encouraged them to reinvigorate cultural traditions as social glue.

Community traditions such as rewang, kenduri, art attractions, and gotong-royong have constructed community knowledge (knowledge construction), teaching to accept and recognize all differences (Esack, 1996).

The traditions practiced by the community have shown their importance in maintaining harmony and strengthening tolerance. It also made Kayu Aro, especially Bedeng VIII Village, appointed as Village Conscious Harmony. The determination of Bedeng VIII Village in Kerinci Regency, Jambi Province as such a village in December 2021 was assessed based on aspects of religious, tribal and cultural diversity. The establishment of Conscious Harmony Villages was intended to represent miniatures of the Indonesian nation in religious harmony and be laboratories for multiculturalism.

Bedeng VIII villagers placed local culture and wisdom as a foundation for social interaction, so that differences in beliefs and tribes were not obstacles to creating harmony. Their togetherness was formed because almost all social activities performed out together. As stated by the Head of Bedeng VIII Village, Poniran:

"The daily life of the residents of Bedeng 8 village takes place in harmony, mutual help, friendship between villagers, and visits during holidays even though they are different religions and customs." (I3, Interview, January 28, 2022).

The ability to manage harmony in heterogeneous communities was an indicator of establishing a Harmony Conscious Village and the level of tolerance and cooperation between religious people. The existence of such a village could be a model (best practice) for other villages in applying the idea of multiculturalism because the realization of multiculturalism has focused only on the level of discourse and legislation, but is weak at the level of implementation (Yusdani, 2018). In addition, the existence of Harmony Conscious Villages could also be considered to be an effort to mitigate the adverse effects of identity politics practiced in the community.

FKUB and the Challenges of Multiculturalism

In carrying out its duties, Kerinci FKUB refers to the Minister's Joint Regulation (PBM) Numbers 9 and 8 of 2006. Among the duties of FKUB districts are conducting dialogue with religious leaders and community leaders; accommodating and distributing community aspirations; socializing laws and regulations; and providing written recommendations on applications or permission to establish houses of worship.

FKUB Kerinci was dealing with a homogeneous society in both religious and cultural aspects. Faith-based conflicts rarely occurred in Kerinci society. Generally,

conflict (nonphysical) takes place in religions internally, between religious traditions/organizations. Conflicts in the Kerinci Regency tended to be caused by political and economic disagreements, and land grabs. At the same time, religion/religious groups were only a tool for mass mobilization and seizing influence. FKUB, in this case, took steps in relation to dialogue and socialization between disputing groups; for example, between Salafi-Wahabi and local communities (traditional Islam) and between Majlis Nur Mutiara Marifatullah (tarekat) and the general public.

"We conducted a study on Salafi (harakah Islamiyah), then we socialized to the community so as not to get caught up in intolerance." (I4, Interview with the head of FKUB Kerinci, February 2, 2022)

FKUB Kerinci also initiated a harmonious national dialogue ahead of the 2019 general election and the presidential election of 27th October 2018 at the campus of the Islamic State Institute (IAIN) Kerinci. In the interview with the chairman of FKUB, it was mentioned that the dialogue was a step to anticipate the occurrence of conflict in the community and to minimize the politicization of religion because the impact of this would be significant for religious harmony.

In addition to dialogue, FKUB also proposed a "declaration" with the community and youth organizations, community leaders, and interfaith leaders as a commitment to care for the harmonization of religious harmony in Kerinci Regency in order to realize peaceful elections (See Table 1).

Table 1 shows the dialogue themes concerning multiculturalism, tolerance and moderation. The selection of these themes shows FKUB's capacity to realize harmony and foster an egalitarian spirit in society. In addition, the involvement of stakeholders, governments and officials in the dialogue shows that harmony issues are treated enthusiastically. However, the involvement of religious leaders as speakers remains minimal.

An egalitarian citizenship climate among religious people can be achieved by strengthening laws and legal consensus, thus ensuring that religions are treated equally by applicable legal policies, both majority and minority ones. For example, in terms of establishing houses of worship, some regulations must be obeyed by all religious adherents so that inequality of rights between the majority and minorities can be avoided.

Nevertheless, these regulations cannot necessarily be implemented in the field. FKUB had difficulty when dealing with the majority religion. Often the construction of houses of worship took place ahead of licensing, causing complaints from followers of other religions who were experiencing followers of other religions who

Table 1

Dialogue Agenda and Socialization of FKUB Kerinci 2017-2021

Agenda	Topic	Speakers	Audiences
Public Dialogue (2017)	Multiculturalism for Community Harmony in Kerinci District	• Dr. H. Adirozal • (Regent of Kerinci) • Dr. Hadi Chandra (Chairman of FKUB) • Hardiman, S.Ag. • (Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion Kerinci) • Kerinci Resort Police • Kerinci State Prosecutor • Head of the National Unity and Political Institution (Kesbangpol) Kerinci	Mass organizations, youth organizations, interfaith leaders, community leaders
Dialogue of Harmony and Nationality (2018)	Caring for the Harmonization of Religious Harmony in Kerinci Regency to Realize Peaceful and Fair Elections	• Dr. H. Adirozal • Dr. Hadi Chandra • Kerinci Resort Police • Kerinci State Prosecutor • Hardiman, S.Ag.	Mass organizations, youth organizations, interfaith leaders, community leaders
Socialization of the Minister's Joint Regulation (PBM) Numbers 9 and 8 of 2006 (2018)	Anticipating Religious Conflict in Kerinci District	• Hardiman, S.Ag. • Dr. Hadi Chandra • Edi Ruslan, MH. (Kayu Aro sub-district head) • Irwanto, S.Ag. (Secretary of FKUB)	Mass organizations, youth organizations, interfaith and community leaders, government officials
Public Dialogue (2019)	Moderation and Religious Harmony	• Dr. H. Adirozal • Dr. Hadi Chandra • Hardiman, S.Ag. • Kerinci Resort Police	Mass organizations, youth organizations, interfaith leaders, community leaders

Socialization of the Minister's Joint Regulation (PBM) at Danau Kerinci District (2020)	Socialization of the Minister's Joint Regulation (PBM) Number 9 and 8 of 2006	• Dr. Hadi Chandra • Irwanto, S.Ag.	Mass organizations, youth organizations, interfaith and community leaders, government officials
Inauguration of Village Conscious Harmony (2021)	Inauguration of Village Conscious Harmony at Jambi Province level and Religious Moderation Dialogue	• Apani Saharudin (Assistant I for Government and Welfare of Jambi Province) • H. Julan • (Regional Office of Jambi's Ministry of Religion) • Dr. H. Adirozal • Poniran (Village Head of Bedeng 8) • Dr. Hadi Chandra	Mass organizations, youth organizations, interfaith and community leaders, government officials

were experiencing licensing problems. In addition, the majority tended to show attitudes marked by panic towards minorities. In the case of licensing houses of worship, this further confirms the presence of symptoms called Najib Burhani (2019) related to the tyranny of minorities. Generally, the licensing of houses of worship (minority religions) is always constrained by administrative issues, as stated by the Chairman of FKUB Kerinci:

> "I am just concerned that when Muslims establish a mosque loosely, it will be difficult for followers of other religions, and it might cause tensions. In Sungai Jambu, someone wants to establish a church, but the recommendation has not been issued because the requirements are not met, as the minimum number of worshippers using the place of worship is 90, with the support of at least 60 local residents."

FKUB Kerinci anticipated the problems by conducting intense socialization as a preventive measure to avoid potential religious-based conflicts. Although there had never been a conflict between religions in Kerinci regency, this did not mean the potential could be ignored, as the issue of licensing houses of worship in many areas was one of the triggering factors for conflict. Therefore, synergy and coordination between stakeholders were critical.

The dominance of Islam in Kerinci, at 90 % or greater, has been one of the rare factors in cases of interfaith conflict. The majority religion was too dominant, so minority religions tended to exclude themselves from society. From the observations, it was precisely the hardening of identity that occurred in internal religious groups in Islam that had the potential to generate sentiments, and even disputes in society. In other words, the threat of multiculturalism came from the firkah (group) in internal Islam.

The characteristics of these firkah were divided into two types: fundamentalist and moderate. Fundamentalists tended to reject the idea of multiculturalism, which had always been identified with the West or to be part of secularism, while moderates welcomed multiculturalism, both theoretically and in practice. More detailed descriptions of their charcteristics are shown in Table 2.

The difference in religious approaches of the two types of firkah have consequences for multiculturalism. Each firkah had its own theological arguments related to understanding the notion. Building synergy between multiculturalism and religion was inevitable to create a harmonious and just life. Religious societies can understand the idea of multiculturalism by pursuing two issues. First, the reinterpretation of orthodox religious doctrines was used as a basis for being exclusive and extreme. The rejection of multiculturalism, a global discourse, indicated stagnation in the interpretation of religious texts. Second, dialogue religion with modern ideas (Desky & Rijal, 2021). This effort emphasized a dialogical and integrative approach to understanding the increasingly complex realities of community and religious life. Therefore, efforts to dialogue between religion and modernity become crucial in a multi-religious and multicultural life, so that religion does not lose its relevance to the ever-changing reality over time (Abdullah, 2020).

Table 2
Fundamentalist and Moderate Characteristics

Firkah Characteristic	Theology	Political Stance	Approach	Citizenship Stance
Fundamentalist	Purification	Oppositionalism	Literal/scriptural	Anti Pluralism/ Multiculturalism
Moderate	Inclusive	Accommodative	Contextual	Pro Pluralism/ Multiculturalism

The contestation of identity and the production of sentiments between firkah exacerbated the climate of multiculturalism in society. In addition, the contestation of firkah has shifted from theological discourse to the political-bureaucratic realm, as evidenced by the intervention of firkah in the recruitment or determination of specific positions in government agencies. This trend opened up opportunities for massive politicization of firkah. The orientation of the community changed to practical politics, and the impact was significant on polarization in society.

FKUB Kerinci's attention to the firkah issue and the potential conflict was minimal. The approach of dialogue and socialization still led to elite Islamic discourses. The themes of dialogue put very little pressure on the introduction of firkah, both in movement and ideology. In addition, it was the reason why the idea of multiculturalism was challenging to accept in rural communities. Elite discourse, as the themes of dialogue conducted by FKUB, was more compatible with academics and the middle class than the general public. Likewise, the narrative or language was too formal and academic. The next problem, the quantity and intensity of dialogue, was only considered once or twice a year. Therefore, the idea of multiculturalism is conveyed sporadically, without concepts, and without concrete visions (Raihani, 2017). Furthermore, rarely do FKUB activists preach to the grassroots or lecture to villages (Qodir, 2018), which is a practical approach to explaining the idea of multiculturalism.

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, patterns of identity politics at the national and local levels are primarily determined by society's social dynamics and cultural basis. In general, FKUB responded to the practice of identity politics by intensifying interfaith dialogue and socialization, which referred to Ministerial Joint Regulation (PBM) Numbers 9 and 8 of 2006. However, realizing such regulations at the local level was very monotonous and tended to be a mere formality. Therefore, it was difficult to rely on the attitude of religious and social organizations to answer the challenges of social disintegration caused by strengthening identity political practices. Consequently, FKUB, as an institution for strengthening multiculturalism, operates not only at the discourse and theoretical level but also at the implementation and practice levels. The concept of multiculturalism, which FKUB activists have not fully understood, is a paradigmatic obstacle that has caused the implementation process to stagnate and become unequal. Instead of affirming multiculturalism, they have stuck to a conservative mental construct. In other words, the paradigm error in undertaking the primary mission of multiculturalism can potentially lead to broader conflicts.

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