



Religious Coexistence in Pendowoharjo Village, Yogyakarta: Examining the Role of Education in Religious Communities as an Effort Towards Peace

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Mukotip¹, Mohd. Reza Pahlevi²

¹Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University of Yogyakarta, ²Mamba'ul 'Ulum
Islamic Institute of Surakarta
hmukotipmpdi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Pendowoharjo Village, Yogyakarta, is a suburban area undergoing urbanization. Amidst the general trend that suburban areas are prone to interfaith conflict due to competition over resources and public space, Pendowoharjo Village actually demonstrates harmonious interfaith relations, as seen in its inclusive social interactions. The religious diversity in this village, which consists of Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu communities, does not cause friction, but rather demonstrates tangible forms of tolerance and cooperation. This article aims to understand the role of education in creating a democratic space for the development of interfaith harmony. This study attempts to fill a gap in the literature on religious harmony, which tends to focus on religious moderation or tolerance in a theoretical context. This study uses a qualitative approach with field case studies. Case studies were chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of religious harmony in Pendowoharjo Village, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta. Data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Informants consisted of religious leaders, village officials, community members, and other stakeholders. The results of the study show that the people of Pendowoharjo Village have succeeded in building and maintaining harmonious religious harmony despite religious diversity. There are no significant social or religious conflicts in this village. In fact, there are four places of worship in one neighborhood unit located close to each other, indicating a high level of social tolerance. One tangible example of this harmony is the donation of waqf land by a Muslim family for the construction of Pura Karang Gede, a Hindu place of worship. One of the main factors contributing to this harmony is education. The existence of Islamic boarding schools and other religious institutions provides the community, including children and young people, with a moderate and inclusive understanding. Religious education is aimed at fostering tolerance and respect for differences. This makes the village a concrete and potential example as a national model for building a peaceful and prosperous pluralistic society. The practice of coexistence in Pendowoharjo Village is worthy of being used as a model for other communities in the context of inclusive social development. This article offers significant opportunities for discussion at international conferences, as it provides relevant empirical case studies for understanding and developing strategies for religious coexistence in multicultural societies globally.

Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country with a highly diverse range of religions, ethnicities, and cultures (Rusydi & Zolehah, 2018). This diversity, on the one hand, has the potential to create social friction, but on the other hand, it can also be a solid foundation for the creation of an inclusive and harmonious society (Jannah & Nawir, 2018). As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has extensive experience in managing interfaith relations

through cultural approaches, interfaith dialogue, and state policies based on the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity). In this context, education plays a strategic role in ensuring that this diversity is maintained peacefully and does not cause social tension (Madjid, 1992).

The village of Pendowoharjo, located in Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, is a concrete example of the local community's success in managing diversity. In this village, four houses of worship of different religions stand side by side. This fact illustrates the potential for significant differences, but the social reality shows the opposite: community life is peaceful, orderly, and sustainable. The social relations of the residents do not stop at passive tolerance, but are manifested through active cooperation in the social, cultural, and community spheres. Thus, religious plurality in Pendowoharjo is not a source of division, but rather a social capital that strengthens community cohesion.

This religious harmony did not arise spontaneously, but was formed through a process of cross-community education, both in formal institutions (schools) and non-formal institutions (religious lectures, community forums, social-religious activities). Education is an important means of internalizing the values of pluralism, respect for differences, and interfaith cooperation (Mukotip et al., 2024). Local values such as mutual cooperation and deliberation are also integrated to strengthen social solidarity. From this perspective, the experience of the Pendowoharjo community can be used as a model for developing multicultural education strategies that are relevant to Indonesia's diverse context and in line with the global agenda of *peace education* and sustainable community development (Tilaar, 2004).

Theoretically, multicultural education emphasizes the importance of recognizing diversity, empowering all social groups, and striving for social justice (Banks, 2019). Banks, for example, explains that multicultural education is not only about incorporating different cultural content into the curriculum, but also transforming the structure of education to make it more equitable and inclusive (Banks, 2010). Meanwhile, according to UNESCO, the idea of *peace education* is directed at fostering tolerance, non-violent conflict resolution, and the development of a culture of peace from the primary education level onwards (UNESCO, 2011). John Dewey adds that education must be a means of expanding social experience, building democracy, and teaching cooperative skills that are relevant to life in a pluralistic society (Dewey, 1916). Thus, a holistic approach to education can serve as a vital instrument in nurturing religious coexistence.

Previous studies on pluralism in Indonesia have tended to focus on the potential for conflict, intolerance, and identity issues. In fact, some studies view religious plurality as a factor of social vulnerability that can trigger fragmentation if not managed properly. In contrast to this tendency, this study focuses on peaceful practices, specifically how local communities have successfully built interfaith coexistence through education. Thus, this study offers a new perspective that emphasizes the dimension of success, not just the potential for division.

Based on this research, the following research questions can be formulated: (1) What form does religious coexistence take in Pendowoharjo Village, which is characterized by the existence of four houses of worship of different religions? and (2) What is the role of education, both formal and non-formal, in maintaining social harmony amid the religious plurality of the Pendowoharjo community?

In line with the research questions formulated above, this study aims to: (1) describe the form of religious coexistence that takes place in Pendowoharjo Village, and (2) analyze the role of formal and non-formal education in strengthening social harmony among religious communities. The benefits of this research cover two aspects. First, theoretical benefits, namely enriching the literature on multicultural education and the study of religious coexistence in Indonesia with an emphasis on peaceful practices. Second, practical benefits, namely providing recommendations for local governments, educational institutions, and interfaith communities in formulating education strategies oriented towards social peace and the sustainability of religious harmony.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This approach was chosen because the focus of the research is to deeply understand the practice of religious coexistence in Pendowoharjo Village and the role of education in maintaining social harmony. The qualitative method allows researchers to explore the experiences, perspectives, and narratives of informants comprehensively in accordance with the social and cultural context of the local community (Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted in Pendowoharjo Village, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, which is known as an area with religious diversity and the existence of four houses of worship of different religions. The research subjects included religious leaders, school teachers, administrators of non-formal educational institutions, village officials, and community members who were active in interfaith activities. Informants were selected using

purposive sampling, which is the selection of informants who were considered to have knowledge and experience relevant to the focus of the research (Sugiyono, 2017).

Research data was collected through three main techniques, namely *in-depth interviews* with religious leaders, educators, and the community to explore their experiences in maintaining religious harmony; participant observation in the form of direct observation of community interactions in socio-religious and educational activities, both in schools and community forums; and documentation in the form of village document studies, educational institution activity archives, and records of relevant interfaith activities (Moleong, 2017). The data obtained was analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, which is the process of selecting, simplifying, and organizing data according to the research focus; presentation of data in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, and charts; and drawing conclusions/verification, namely interpreting data to answer research questions (Miles et al., 2014).

To ensure the validity of the findings, the researchers used source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from various informants (religious leaders, teachers, community members), while method triangulation was carried out by combining interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checks were conducted with key informants to ensure that the researchers' data and interpretations were consistent with the informants' actual experiences. With this method, the study is expected to produce an in-depth, holistic, and credible picture of the practice of religious coexistence and the role of education in maintaining social harmony in Pendowoharjo Village.

Result

Religious coexistence is not only interpreted as harmonious relationships between individuals, but also includes government policies that guarantee freedom of religion and freedom of worship for all citizens. In the context of a multicultural and multireligious society, this coexistence is seen as a fundamental foundation for the creation of peace, social stability, and the acceleration of development (Wajdi et al., 2024). Recognition of the importance of religious coexistence shows that differences in beliefs should not be seen as a potential for conflict. On the

contrary, this diversity can be a source of social wealth and valuable collective capital if managed wisely and based on mutual respect and appreciation for human rights principles (Pahrudin et al., 2024). The state's policy of strengthening religious moderation while protecting the right to worship is clear evidence of its commitment to maintaining peaceful social life amid plurality.

Religious Coexistence in Pendowoharjo Village

The harmonious life of the Pendowoharjo community has been going on for a long time. Pendowoharjo Village is one of 75 villages in Bantul Regency, which administratively consists of 16 hamlets and 94 neighborhood associations, with a population of 22,818 people and 7,857 households in 2023, inhabiting an area of 698.17 hectares (field observation data, 2024). The following is the percentage of religious adherents in Pendowoharjo, Yogyakarta:

Table 1. Percentage of religious adherents in Pendowoharjo Village

Religion	Number of Residents	%
Islam	21,655	93
Catholic	709	3
Christian	206	1
Hindu	19	
Buddhist	4	

Source: (Pendowoharjo Village Data, 2023).

Field findings show that the religious composition in Pendowoharjo Village is dominated by Muslims with a percentage of around 93%, followed by Catholics at 3% and Protestants at 1%, while Hindus and Buddhists remain below 1%. These demographic conditions do not prevent the creation of a harmonious social life. The local community is able to build interfaith relations harmoniously without any indication of discrimination, extremism, or other practices of intolerance. Furthermore, according to informants, social interactions amid religious, ethnic, and racial diversity are conducive and sustainable. This shows that religious coexistence has become

part of the daily practice of the Pendowoharjo community, which is characterized by the absence of friction or conflict between religious communities.

"...There have been no conflicts in various community agendas to date, no religious conflicts, even though Pendowoharjo has three houses of worship, there have never been any conflicts. In the village of Pendowoharjo, religious harmony has existed for hundreds of years..." (interview with the village head, 2024)

"...To date, there has never been any social or religious conflict in the life of the Pendowoharjo community. The social interaction and communication within the Pendowoharjo community is very good, as evidenced by the absence of conflict in our area. The community lives in peace, security, and harmony, despite their different beliefs..." "The community is able to build religious coexistence because they are accustomed to living side by side despite their different beliefs, and various houses of worship have been established for a long time, thereby building tolerance among religious communities..." (Interview with Kamituwa, 2024).

Field research conducted in Pendowoharjo Village reveals a social phenomenon that deserves attention in the study of interfaith relations in Indonesia. This village is inhabited by Muslims, Christians (Protestants), Catholics, Hindus, and a small number of Buddhists. Of these five religions, four have officially established places of worship in the village: a mosque as the center of religious activities for Muslims, the Good Shepherd Catholic Church, a Protestant church, and a temple built on land donated by a Muslim family for Hindus. Buddhists also have followers, although their numbers are very limited and they do not yet have a specific place of worship.

"...Here we have a mosque, a church, a temple, and also a Good Shepherd house... We live in peace, there are no conflicts. In general, the community respects each other, and we have a high level of tolerance here... When there are events held at places of worship, we support them. For example, at the temple, we all participate in maintaining security and parking..." (Interview with Mr. H, a member of the community)

The existence of four houses of worship from four different religions in one village is a rare

occurrence in other areas. This makes Pendowoharjo Village a concrete example of religious coexistence in a relatively small social space. What is even more interesting is that these religious differences do not cause social friction, discrimination, or conflict. On the contrary, the community has successfully turned this diversity into a foundation that strengthens social cohesion and builds harmonious togetherness.

This coexistence is evident in everyday life. When Hindus hold religious celebrations, people of other faiths participate in maintaining order and ensuring that the rituals proceed solemnly. Solidarity was also evident when a church in Bantul Regency was burned down; the people of Pendowoharjo Village immediately took the initiative to guard the village entrance and places of worship so that similar incidents would not spread to their area. Conversely, when Muslims celebrate their religious holidays, the non-Muslim residents of also participate by offering greetings, gifts, or other forms of solidarity.

The Role of Education in Maintaining Social Harmony Amidst Religious Plurality in Pendowoharjo Community

In the context of the Pendowoharjo village community, education plays a significant role in strengthening religious coexistence. The relationship between education and socio-religious life is reflected in the community's ability to build harmony and internalize values of tolerance in their daily lives. The existence of religious institutions such as the Annur Islamic Boarding School and the Al-Qur'an College is a strategic instrument that not only functions as a center for formal learning but also as a moral and spiritual reference for the community. Through activities such as teaching children, providing religious counseling services, organizing majelis taklim (religious gatherings), and holding recitation forums, these institutions play a role in transmitting religious values into the public sphere.

Furthermore, the pesantren's affiliation with Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and other religious assemblies demonstrates the continuity between local Islamic traditions and national religious organizational structures. The main orientation of these institutions is not merely to convey normative doctrines but also to articulate Islamic teachings in the context of Pendowoharjo's social life. Thus, religious education in this village can be seen as an agent of social construction that reinforces interfaith coexistence and strengthens social integration in a multicultural society (Observation, 2024). This is reinforced by the results of interviews which

stated that:

"...Religious leaders avoid excessive fanaticism towards their beliefs and implement this in the community so that a harmonious and peaceful society is created. The community understands and is able to distinguish between social and religious activities so that there is no friction between religious communities. Furthermore, we have a village-level FKUB organization, which is a forum for communication between religious communities. The village government also facilitates FKUB activities, which are carried out regularly " (Interview with Kamituwa, 2024). This was also reinforced by a statement from the village head, who said:

"In Pendowoharjo, religious institutions such as Islamic boarding schools affiliated with Nahdhatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and others are also active. Furthermore, each religion has its own religious institution, and religious adherents participate in the activities of their respective religious institutions (activities other than celebrations or major holidays, including religious studies). (Interview with the Village Head, 2024).

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the religious understanding of the community and is the main foundation for creating harmony in Pendowoharjo Village. The existence of Islamic boarding schools functions as a space for scientific dialectics that not only transfers religious knowledge but also presents Islamic interpretations that are contextualized with the social realities of the local community. Thus, Islamic boarding schools are important agents in maintaining and preserving religious coexistence at the local level. In addition, religious leaders from various faiths also play a significant role through religious and social activities. They consistently provide religious advice and emphasize the importance of building a life of " " (harmony in diversity) based on coexistence and mutual respect. The role of these religious leaders strengthens moral legitimacy in society and is a major pillar of social harmony. As Slamet emphasized, coexistence among religious communities is not only built through formal rules, but also through the example and guidance provided by religious leaders to their communities.

"...Hindu leaders interact well with the community in social activities such as cleaning

the neighborhood/hamlet together, helping each other with celebrations, or visiting each other when residents are sick or attending funerals, and so on." (Interview with Mr. S, 2024).

The above statement is one example of the role of religious leaders in the process and efforts to maintain a harmonious and peaceful life. With education or knowledge, communities can maintain religious coexistence and build a more tolerant and inclusive society. The correlation between education and religious coexistence is close and important to understand how education can influence the dynamics of interfaith relations in a society.

This positive interfaith interaction is reinforced by neighborhood-level consultation forums. In meetings held in the Karanggede neighborhood of Pendowoharjo Village, for example, the importance of maintaining communal life without discriminating based on religious, ethnic, cultural, or traditional backgrounds is always emphasized. This forum serves as a means of social education that not only resolves technical community issues but also instills values of tolerance and collective solidarity. This confirms that the practice of coexistence in Pendowoharjo does not stop at the symbolic level but is internalized through institutionalized social mechanisms.

"...When I was still serving as the head of the neighborhood association, there was a socialization program about the law. It was held, for example, on Saturday nights, where we provided socialization about harmony and discussed community life. The key to maintaining this harmonious life is that we protect our juniors and educate them to live in harmony..." (Interview with Mr. H, 2025)

"...We certainly help with the religious activities of other faiths. The key to our life here is respect and tolerance. During our time living in this village, there has never been any friction between religious communities. In fact, we help out, such as when there is an event at the temple. Usually, people from outside the village, from Yogyakarta and other areas, attend, and we help to ensure that the event runs safely..." (Interview with Mr. M, 2025)

Interviews with several community leaders reveal the social strategies practiced to maintain social cohesion and interfaith harmony in Pendowoharjo Village. Mr. H, a former

neighborhood association leader, explains that socialization of laws and values of harmony is often conducted regularly, for example on Sunday Kliwon nights. These activities serve as a means of social education, where the community is encouraged to understand the law while internalizing the value of togetherness in their daily lives. According to him, the key to the continuity of the tradition of *harmony* lies in protecting the younger generation and guiding them to become accustomed to living harmoniously in society.

Meanwhile, Mr. M emphasized the importance of practicing tolerance in the context of interfaith life. He gave an example of community participation in facilitating the Hindu religious ceremony of at the temple, including when the event was attended by participants from outside the village. The villagers actively supported the event so that it ran safely and orderly. This reflects a form of interfaith solidarity, where tolerance is not only discussed, but realized through concrete actions in everyday life.

Discussion

The phenomenon in Pendowoharjo Village can be understood within the framework of the concept of *religious coexistence*. Etymologically, coexistence means "living together peacefully amid differences," while in religious studies, this term refers to the capacity of different communities to maintain their respective religious identities while developing constructive social relations (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007). In this case, Pendowoharjo demonstrates a form of active coexistence, where communities of different religions do not merely coexist, but are also involved in meaningful social interactions, mutual respect, and support for each other's religious activities. This finding is in line with Diana L. Eck's view, which emphasizes that pluralism requires active involvement in building interfaith relationships, not just passive tolerance (Eck, 2001). Pendowoharjo is proof that pluralism is not just an abstract idea, but a reality that is practiced in local communities. The four houses of worship standing side by side are not merely symbols, but arenas where social and religious interactions take place peacefully and productively. Furthermore, the practice of coexistence in Pendowoharjo demonstrates the important role of multicultural education in everyday life. James A. Banks asserts that multicultural education does not stop at teaching tolerance, but aims to create a just and transformative society (Banks, 2019). In Pendowoharjo, this form of education is not only present in formal institutions such as schools, but also in non-formal institutions such as neighborhood association meetings, mutual assistance

traditions, and interfaith activities that instill a collective awareness of the importance of living *in harmony*.

One of the most prominent aspects is the practice of land waqf from Muslim families for the construction of Hindu temples. This action is not only an expression of generosity, but also a representation of spiritual awareness that religious diversity is an integral part of communal life. From a social perspective, this reflects "civil Islam" a form of religiosity that emphasizes social solidarity, inclusiveness, and participation in the public sphere. The land waqf has become a concrete symbol of coexistence, which transcends rhetoric and leads to real action. In addition, the findings of this study challenge the dominant discourse in studies on interreligious relations in Indonesia, which often emphasizes vulnerability to conflict. Zakiyuddin Baidhawry, for example, highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue in overcoming potential identity conflicts (Baidhawry, 2007). Pendowoharjo offers a different perspective, namely that local communities with a strong social base and internalized educational values are capable of developing organic peace mechanisms.

Field research shows that religious minority groups in Pendowoharjo Village exhibit constructive social interaction patterns with the surrounding community. Their involvement in various community activities, such as working together to clean the environment, participating in celebrations, and showing social concern by visiting sick residents and mourning neighbors who have passed away, demonstrates a collective awareness of the importance of interfaith togetherness. These social practices reflect a value of solidarity that transcends the barriers of differences in beliefs. This finding reinforces the view that social harmony is not only built through normative discourse on tolerance, but also through daily interactions that foster a sense of belonging. In the context of Pendowoharjo, the participation of religious communities in social life shows how religious identity can be integrated with civic identity without causing conflict. This is in line with the concept of religious coexistence, which emphasizes the importance of the active involvement of the entire community in strengthening social cohesion.

The findings of the study in Pendowoharjo Village also show that religious leaders have an important contribution in building harmonious social interaction patterns. They consistently avoid excessive fanaticism towards their beliefs and emphasize the values of religious moderation, which are then internalized into the community's life. This attitude has implications for the creation of harmonious and peaceful social relations, in which the community is able to

distinguish between social and religious spaces proportionally. This ability is one of the key factors that prevents friction between religious communities. In addition, the existence of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) at the village level serves as an effective means of communication in bringing together various religious communities. The FKUB is not only a forum for dialogue, but is also actively facilitated by the village government through a regular agenda. This demonstrates the structural support of the local government in strengthening religious coexistence.

The participation of religious institutions also confirms the existence of inclusive socio-religious dynamics in Pendowoharjo. Islamic boarding schools affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah institutions, and religious institutions from non-Muslim communities play a central role in guiding their citizens towards constructive religious practices. Their activities are not limited to religious celebrations, but also include regular studies, recitations, and discussion forums that emphasize the function of religious institutions as agents of moral and social education. Thus, the pattern of religious diversity in Pendowoharjo shows a synergistic interaction between the community, religious institutions, and local government. This confirms that religious coexistence does not only arise from interpersonal tolerance, but also from institutional support and sustainable social structures.

Education plays a central role in maintaining social harmony in Pendowoharjo Village. The dissemination of laws and social studies conducted on a regular basis, as explained by informants, can be understood as a form of effective non-formal education in strengthening residents' understanding of social norms, community ethics, and the importance of living in harmony. This forum serves as a means of internalizing values, especially for the younger generation, so that the pattern of *harmony* is not only maintained but also passed on in a sustainable manner. Thus, education in this local context is not merely about conveying information but also serves as a medium for passing on a culture of peace between generations. Interfaith tolerance in Pendowoharjo is built through practical education. Community participation in assisting the religious events of other communities is a social learning process that fosters respect for differences while strengthening solidarity. Through this tangible involvement, the community not only understands the concept of tolerance but also practices it in their daily lives. This shows that coexistence education in the village is contextual: residents learn through direct experience how to build togetherness in diversity.

The phenomenon of social education in Pendowoharjo Village is also relevant to the discourse on multicultural education in Indonesia. Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of instilling the values of mutual respect, tolerance, and equality in diversity. The practices in Pendowoharjo show that these values can not only be integrated into the formal curriculum but also brought to life through community forums and participation in social and religious activities. In other words, this community experience can serve as a model that multicultural education is not merely a top-down policy but can grow from local initiatives based on a culture of mutual cooperation and *harmony*. This model has the potential to be replicated in other regions as a strategy to strengthen religious coexistence within the framework of a pluralistic and inclusive Indonesia.

Thus, Pendowoharjo can be seen as a model of religious coexistence that is unique to Indonesia. This village shows that harmony does not have to be built through formal regulations alone, but can grow from the collective consciousness of the local community. Coexistence here also does not mean erasing religious identity, but rather celebrating these differences as a source of social strength. The fact that Buddhists can live side by side even without their own place of worship, and are still respected as part of the community, is proof that minorities also have a proper place in the social configuration of the village.

Academically, the case of Pendowoharjo enriches the literature on religious pluralism in Indonesia by providing an alternative model: from a focus on the vulnerability of conflict to an emphasis on the success of local communities in maintaining peace. This is relevant in a global context where many pluralistic societies are still struggling with social fragmentation. Pendowoharjo, with its four houses of worship representing four religions and its maintained harmony, shows that religious coexistence is not a utopia, but a reality that can be achieved through shared commitment, multicultural education, and inclusive social practices.

Conclusion

Research on the life of the Pendowoharjo Village community shows that religious coexistence can be realized in a pluralistic social space. The presence of four houses of worship from four religions, Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Hinduism, as well as the existence of Buddhists, even without an official place of worship, does not cause social tension. On the contrary, this diversity has become a strong foundation for building solidarity, mutual trust, and

harmonious practices of togetherness. Education has proven to play a central role in this process. The values of tolerance, mutual cooperation, and respect for differences are not only taught in schools but also internalized through community meetings, social traditions, and practical actions such as the donation of land by Muslim families for the construction of a Hindu temple. This collective awareness enables the people of Pendowoharjo to respond positively to religious differences, even turning them into a source of social and spiritual strength.

Theoretically, these findings enrich the study of religious pluralism and multicultural education in Indonesia, while challenging discourses that emphasize the potential for conflict. Practically, the Pendowoharjo experience can serve as an inspiring model for other communities in building interfaith harmony. This confirms that religious coexistence is not merely a normative ideal, but a reality that can grow through inclusive education, continuous dialogue, and the community's commitment to maintaining *harmony* amid diversity.

Author's Statement

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no personal, professional, or institutional interests that could influence the results of this research.

Additional information

This article is part of a broader study on education, social harmony, and religious coexistence at the community level. There are no additional appendices other than those listed in the main text.

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