Response of Students Majoring in Religion Towards Religious Tolerance

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Abstract: This study is intended to describe the response of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance. The three things were to be described, namely: (1) student perception, (2) student attitude and (3) student action/participation towards religious tolerance. The study used a descriptive quantitative survey method. The students majoring in Theology at IAIN (State Institute of Islamic Studies), *Abdi Wacana* Theological Academy and *Pastor Bonus* Theological Academy in Pontianak in the academic year of 2016 constituted the research population. Meanwhile, a sample of 50 students was taken from the population. Indirect communication technique was used as technique of data collecting, with the instrument of data collecting being a questionnaire. Quantitative descriptive percentage analysis was used to process the data. The results revealed that the response (perception, attitude and participation) of the students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance was categorized as good.

1 INTRODUCTION

News reports about ethnic, religious, racial and intergroup relations (*SARA*) is on the rise. Throughout 2016 almost every day social media such as *Facebook, line, YouTube*, *detik.com, kompas.com, tribun.com*, *twitter and televisions* carried news articles highlighting the pros and cons on the issue of *SARA,* particularly in the context of the Jakarta governor election. Conflicting opinions from different groups of society ranging from the lay people, artists, cultural elites, religionists, intellectuals, political elites, bureaucrats and military and police officers have become the norms of the day.

Open and massive debates on the issue of *SARA* by public figures through social media and mass media in a rather long duration triggered intolerance between ethnicity and religion. Public demonstrations with the nuance of SARA between the pros and cons took place in every region, with the biggest being the demonstrations defending Islam in Jakarta in November 4, 2016 and December 2, 2016 which were attended by millions of participants (*detik.com, kompas.com and tribun.com*, *2016*).

The problems of religious and racial intolerance are highly sensitive, and have the potential to trigger conflicts as happened repeatedly in various parts of Indonesia, for example in Ambon and Poso in 1999, in Sambas, west Kalimantan and Sampit, central Kalimantan in 2000.

Intolerance and conflict are always causing instability in various aspects of life in society, and it takes a long time to recover, and requires substantial social and economic costs. As experienced by many countries such as South Africa, Iraq and Afghanistan, social reconciliation is not easy. It takes a long time to happen, and very costly. In Indonesia reconciliation following the Indonesian Communist Party abortive coup that happened many years ago is an uphill struggle and until now has not yet materialized.

The research conducted by Vermonte (2013) on religious tolerance revealed higher tendency of intolerance among religious practitioners. The above findings of Vermonte are in line with the research findings on religious conflicts in Indonesia since the reform era which showed an increase in violence, intolerance and religious radicalism (Tholkhah, 2012).

A survey study on religious harmony in Indonesia which was conducted in 2014 showed that although in general the condition of religious harmony was good, and the harmony has been cultivated for a long

time, deviation from social and cultural norms in the form of religious conflicts happened frequently and could not be avoided (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2014; Tholkhah, 2012). In particular, the survey findings also showed that the tolerance of Muslims was lower compared to those of other faiths. One of the factors contributing to intolerance and conflict among religion practitioners is concerned with differences in the interpretation of the holy scriptures which act as sources of religious teaching (Pines and Maslach, 1993).

The issue of *SARA* in west Kalimantan is potentially high enough. The phenomena could be seen in repeated interracial conflicts (the last being in 2000), demonstration rejecting the *FPI* (Islamic Defenders Front) in 2013, rejecting the construction of places of worship of particular religions, rejecting the *GAFATAR* movement in 2016, rejecting the placement of transmigration in border areas in 2015, the rejection by provincial legislator towards provincial regulation on customary society in 2016, and the phenomenon of vote polarization between those supporting and abstaining in the election of institution heads in various levels when the candidates were of different faith from the voters.

Based on the above background and the fact that two regional elections would be held in west Kalimantan in 2017 and 2018, as well as the tendency towards greater issue of *SARA* in every regional election in other regions, it is predicted that the use of *SARA* discourses would be on the rise. To find out the truth of the above assumption, it is necessary to do an early detection through this research on the response of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Response

Response is a kind of positive or negative reaction given by an individual. Response appeared after an individual or a group of individuals perceive the presence of an object and interpret the object they perceived (Adi, 1994). Daryl (2002) defines response as a kind of behaviour or attitude in the forms of detailed comprehension, evaluation, influence, rejection, and likes or dislikes as well as taking advantage from a phenomenon.

According to Adi (1994), Thalib and Gill (2012) the most important thing in measuring responses is to know perception, attitude and participation. In other words, to know the response of an individual or a group of individuals towards something, it is necessary to know their perception, attitude and participation in that thing.

Adi (1994) states that perception refers to our seeing, hearing, feeling and smelling of the world around us. Perception is formed by the data we get from our surrounding which were absorbed by our senses as well as from other things. Perception is a cognitive process experienced by everyone in trying to understand information about their surrounding either from sight, hearing, feeling and accepting. Perception is a unique interpretation of a situation and not a correct record of the situation. The above analysis shows that perception is an individual or society's understanding of an object that is still in their thoughts.

An individual perception of something will have an influence on his/her attitude. As far as attitude is concerned, Adi (1994) defines it as an individual's inclination or willingness to behave in a certain way when faced with a particular stimulus. Attitude is an organization of an individual's opinion or belief towards a relative object or situation coupled with a particular feeling. It provides the basis for an individual to respond or behave in ways they have chosen.

Stimulus refers to both inner stimuli like self-actualization and physical one like the results or outcome of development. A change of attitude could depict the way an individual response towards a particular object like a change of atmosphere over another situation. The attitude that appears could be positive, in that the person likes, approaches and expects the object. Alternatively, the attitude could be negative, in that the person shuns, or hates a particular object.

Participation refers to a process of mental attitude whereby an individual or members of society actively contribute their creativity and initiative in an attempt to enhance their quality of life. Adi (1994) furthermore states that participation is very important and absolutely necessary if we want to know or measure an individual or group responses to something.

As far as participation is concerned, the factor that gives a lot of influence is vast scope of society's knowledge about something. The level of knowledge about something possessed by an individual could determine their intention in conducting an activity. This knowledge will subsequently influence their attitude, intention, and behaviour. Having knowledge about the benefit of something will lead the person to have a positive attitude about that thing. A positive attitude will influence a person's intention to

participate in an activity relating to that thing. The intention to conduct a particular activity will eventually determine to a considerable degree whether the activity is actually carried out. The activity carried out is known as attitude or behaviour.

2.2 Religious Tolerance

Religious tolerance refers to an attitude accepting diversity and freedom to practice religions/the beliefs of other people or groups. This can happen because the existence of a group, religion or belief is respected by other parties. The acknowledgement is not only limited to equality both in the setting of state, society and in the sight of God, but also in differences in religious instilling and worship which is in line with a civilized and just humanity (Emmanuel, 2003, Rahman and Khambali, 2013, Fios and Gea, 2013).

Religious tolerance however can be said to be ability of a religious group to appreciate and accept other religions' beliefs and practices without necessarily involve or practice it. It is respecting and relating with other peoples' religious beliefs and values (which is quite different from personal faith and beliefs), without enforcing personal interested religion on others who are not adherent followers (Alao, 2017).

According to Osborn (1993) aspects of religious tolerance consist of: (a) acceptance, (b) appreciation, (c) patience, (d) freedom and (e) cooperation. The key to tolerance is accepting another person the way he/she is. In line with the above viewpoint, Eisenstein (2008) states that tolerance manifests itself in a person's willingness to accept the opinion, values, behaviour of another person which is different from his/her own. Therefore, it could be understood that acceptance is a person's willingness to accept another person the way he/she is.

In addition to acceptance, another important thing relating to tolerance is a person's willingness to appreciate everything rejected or defied by someone (Sullivan et al., 1993). Ananda (2015) states that tolerance manifests itself in a person's willingness to respect another person's faith even though he/she does not approve it. The willingness to respect should be based on the belief that it is not right for anyone to force his/her will on another person or group. No person or group should monopolize truth, and this conviction is based on the belief that faith is a personal matter.

Every religion practitioner should respect the existence of other religions with the understanding that they respect the diversity and differences in religious teaching of each respective religion and belief whether the religion is sanctioned or not yet sanctioned by the state. Confronting this reality requires that every religion practitioner should always be able to instill the values of diversity and position themselves in the context of diversity based on the spirit of mutual respect and appreciation among different faiths. They are not supposed to defame other religions or force their faith on to other people.

Another important thing relating to religious tolerance is patience which constitutes a sympathetic attitude towards different point of views and attitudes of other people. Neufeldt (1999) states that tolerance manifests itself in a person's willingness to be patient towards other people's philosophical belief and moral which are supposed to be different, debatable, or even faulty. Such attitude does not mean that one shows approval towards other beliefs. Nor does it mean that one is indifferent towards truth and goodness, and one should not be agnostic and sceptical. Instead, one inclines to have the attitude of respect towards diversity and different human dignity. Patience in the context of religious tolerance could be taken to mean the ability to refrain from the things disapproved or disliked, in the framework of building better social relationship (Khisbiyah, 2007).

Another aspect of tolerance is to give freedom to fellow human beings or fellow residents to practice their faiths or regulate their lives and decide their respective destiny (Walt, 2014). The most essential human rights are the right to freedom/independence, both freedom to think, freedom to have their own will, and freedom to practice their religions/ faiths. Freedom is such a fundamental human right that it is capable of differentiating humans from other creatures. Religious freedom is often misunderstood to mean freedom to practice more than one religion. Here religious freedom means freedom to choose and practice a faith or religion which they think is the right way to salvation without being forced or intimidated.

In the context of Indonesia, the 1945 Constitution article 29 section 2 states that "The state guarantees the freedom of every citizen to profess their respective religions and to worship according to their religions or faiths". It is clear that the state itself guarantees the freedom of their people in choosing and professing their respective religions or beliefs, as well as guarantees and protects their people in carrying out worship according to their respective religions or beliefs.

Yusuf (2013), states that understanding religious tolerance entails two interpretation towards this concept. Firstly, there exists negative interpretation which states that religious tolerance only requires the attitude to let someone have their own way, and not

hurting the feeling other people who profess different or the same faiths. Secondly, there exists positive interpretation which states that there must be assistance or support towards the existence of other people or group. There are two kinds of religious tolerance, namely: static tolerance and dynamic tolerance. Static tolerance is a kind of cold tolerance which does not result in cooperation. If association or relationship among religion practitioners is in the form of static tolerance, the result would be pseudo tolerance. Dynamic tolerance is an active tolerance which results in cooperation for common good. Thus, harmony among religion practitioners is a reflection of togetherness of religionists as one nation.

Therefore, one can understand that the manifestation of religious tolerance is in the form of willingness to cooperate with people of other faiths.

Based on the above exposition, it could be concluded that aspects of religious tolerance are as follows: 1) Acceptance is the willingness of religionists to accept the behaviour and belief which is different from theirs, even though they may not approve of it. 2) Appreciation is the willingness of religionists to appreciate the opinion, viewpoint, belief, custom, behaviour, etc. which are different from theirs or even contradictory to their own conviction. 3) Patience is the ability of religionists to refrain from the things disapproved or disliked, in the framework of building better social relationship. 4) Freedom is the willingness of religionists to give freedom to fellow human beings or fellow residents to practice their faiths or regulate their lives and decide their respective destiny. 5) Cooperation is the willingness of religionists to cooperate with people of other faiths.

3 METHODS

Descriptive quantitative with survey method was the research method used. The students majoring in Theology in Pontianak constituted the research population. Meanwhile, a sample of 50 students was taken from the population, consisting of 23 students of *IAIN* (State Institute of Islamic Studies), 12 students of *Abdi Wacana* Theological Academy and 15 students of *Pastor Bonus* Theological Academy. Indirect communication technique was used as technique of data collecting, with the instrument of data collecting being a questionnaire. Descriptive qualitative percentage analysis was the data analysis used (Sugiyono, 2009). The criteria/ indicator of questionnaire quality are as follows: 81%-100% = very good/ very high, 61%-80% = good/ high, 41%-

60% = good enough/ medium, 21%-40%= bad/ low, and 0%-20%= very bad/ very low.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Perception of Students Majoring

The research on the perception of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance shows the following results:

Table 1: Recapitulation on the perception of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance.

Num.	Aspects of Perception	Percentage				
		VK	K	LK	NK	TNK
1	General Perception	27	58	15	0	0
2	Perception towards Acceptance	26	68	6	0	0
3	Perception towards Appreciation	30	56	14	0	0
4	Perception towards Patience	32	64	4	0	0
5	Perception towards Freedom	22	66	12	0	0
6	Perception towards Cooperation	30	66	4	0	0
	Total	167	387	55	0	0
	Average	28	63	9	0	0

Note: VK= Very Knowledgeable, K= Knowledgeable, LK= Less Knowledgeable, NK= Not Knowledgeable, TNK= Totally Not Knowledgeable.

Based on data recapitulation on the perception of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance, 28% of students have very good perception towards religious tolerance, 63% have good perception and only 9% having not so good perception. 0% of students have bad and very bad perception. Thus, the data show that the perception of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is already good.

4.1.2 The Attitude of Students Majoring

Results on the attitude of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is depicted by the data below in table 2:

Table 2: Recapitulation on the attitude of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance.

Numb.	Aspects of Attitude	Percentage				
		SA	A	LA	NA	TNA
1	Attitude towards Acceptance	22	68.7	9.3	0	0
2	Attitude towards Appreciation	19.3	72.7	8	0	0
3	Attitude towards Patience	17.3	76.7	6	0	0
4	Attitude towards Freedom	23.3	70.7	6	0	0
5	Attitude towards Acceptance	22	68.7	9.3	0	0
	Total	105	360	35	0	0
	Average	21	72	7	0	0

Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, LA= Less Agree, NA= Not Agree, TNA= Totally Not Agree.

Based on data recapitulation on the attitude of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance, 21% of students have very good attitude towards religious tolerance, 72% have good attitude and 7% having not so good attitude, and 0% of students have bad and very bad attitude respectively. Thus, the data show that the attitude of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is categorized as good and very good.

4.1.3 The Action/Participation of Students Majoring

Results on the action/ participation of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is depicted by the data in table 3:

Table 3: Recapitulation on the action/ participation of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance.

Num.	Aspects of Action	Percentage				
		VG	G	LG	NG	TNG
1	Action towards Acceptance	19.3	73.3	7.4	0	0
2	Action towards Appreciation	18.7	73.3	8	0	0
3	Action towards Patience	25.3	70.7	4	0	0
4	Action towards Freedom	18	76	6	0	0
5	Action towards Cooperation	20	74	6	0	0
	Total	101	367	31	0	0
	Average	20	74	6	0	0

Note: VG= Very Good, G= Good, LG= Less Good, NG= Not Good, TNG= Totally Not Good.

Based on data recapitulation on the action/participation of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance, 20% of students have very good action/ participation towards religious tolerance, 74% have good action/ participation, 6% having not so good participation, and 0% of students have bad and very bad action/ participation respectively. Thus, the data show that the action/ participation of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is categorized as good and very good.

4.2 Discussion

In general, the research results show that the response of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is categorized as good and very good. In particular, the perception, attitude and action/ participation of students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance fall into the category of good and very good.

Referring to Vermonte (2013) and Tolkhah (2012), the research results were out of expectation because the research was conducted amid widespread reports and discourse on the issue of SARA in the nation. Moreover, the province of west Kalimantan was ravaged by racial intolerance several decades ago, and regional elections are fast approaching.

The fact that the students were not influenced by the issue of SARA in their view of religious tolerance could be attributable to their being intelligent individuals who give priority to rationality and objectivity and to their receiving correct religious education from their lecturers. It could also be attributable to inclusive religious cultivation in their respective campuses.

Although the research findings show heartening religious tolerance and harmony, anticipation and care should be taken in order not to plunge into intolerance in the future considering that religious tolerance and religious harmony in the nation are always dynamic in nature.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusions

Based on research findings and discussion in Chapter IV, the general conclusion is that the response of the students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is categorized as good. Meanwhile the specific conclusions of this research are the perception, the attitude and the action/participation of

students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance is categorized as good.

5.2   Recommendation

Based on the research conclusions, the researcher gives the following recommendations:

- The response of the students majoring in religion towards religious tolerance which is categorized as good should be maintained by always guarding the religious tolerance;
- Religion-based universities should promote students' activities towards preserving religious tolerance through intra or inter university activities;
- Although only a few students majoring in religion responded negatively towards religious tolerance, they should be given greater attention so as not to cause destructive tendency. They should be given persuasive and educative cultivation.

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