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Harmonizing Diversity: Reviewing Multicultural Awareness and Political Policy

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| **Abstract**  A multicultural society is an intricate social construct with diverse components, including ethnicity, religion, and race, which engage in social interactions that mutually impact one another. Nevertheless, minority groups frequently find themselves in a precarious and subjugated state. The prevalence of majority dominance frequently leads to repressive actions, subsequently provoking resistance from minority factions and even escalating into violent conflicts. This article aims to seek novel strategies for governing pluralistic communities, emphasizing the significance of multicultural consciousness as the fundamental basis for formulating comprehensive and equitable policies. To effectively navigate the intricacies of ethnic interactions, it is essential to implement policies and activities that prioritize justice, autonomy, and shared accountability. To achieve a harmonious multicultural society, it is necessary to reorganize government institutions and create an atmosphere that values, appreciates, and incorporates multiple identities, hence promoting fairness and equality. This article suggests developing an enhanced framework for effectively managing social conflict and fostering harmony in a diverse society.  Keywords: Harmonizing Diversity, Reviewing, Multicultural, Awareness, Political Policy |

# Introduction

The issue of multiculturalism has recently received serious attention among academics, politicians, government, and business groups. Various opinions in the form of writings about multiculturalism decorate various print, electronic, and social media. In-depth and detailed reviews on the issue of multiculturalism in Indonesia, the ethnic situation in various regions, how the practices of multiculturalism issues are carried out, and the consequences that occur can be easily obtained.

The current of globalisation is felt very strongly in every aspect of the life of society, nation, and state. One of the social facts that cannot be avoided in modern and post-modern societies supported by the sophistication of information and communication technology is the emergence of multicultural life.

Indonesia is one of the largest multicultural countries in the world. This fact can be seen from the socio-cultural and geographical conditions that are so diverse and extensive. This diversity will be able to cause various problems, such as corruption, collusion, nepotism, missiles, violence, environmental destruction, separatism, and the loss of humanity to respect the rights of others, which is a natural form of multiculturalism.

Indonesia is a multiethnic country, and if policy decisions are not careful, its diversity will become a factor that weakens the country's resilience. In the end, the country will become a victim of other countries in this era of globalisation. On the other hand, if optimally utilised, Indonesia's diversity will become an asset.

**Definition of Multiculturalism**

Suparlan (2000;3) states that multiculturalism (pluralism) is a concept that can answer the challenges of changing times because multiculturalism is an ideology that glorifies cultural differences or a belief that recognises and encourages the realisation of cultural pluralism as a pattern of community life. Multiculturalism will be a binder and a bridge that accommodates differences, including differences in nationality and ethnicity, in a multicultural society. The differences can be accommodated in public places, workplaces and markets, and the national political, legal, economic, and social equality system.

Setyaningrum (2003;243) writes about multiculturalism concerning collective identity, political policy and social reality. He argues that multiculturalism has two dimensions, namely, the political dimension and the cultural dimension. Multiculturalism is a policy towards protecting the diversity of official identity backgrounds (ethnic, religious, or racial) within a nation-state. Such a policy demands the role of government as a provider and guarantor for the distribution of social justice for stupid access without about. On the other hand, multiculturalism also has a cultural dimension. In this case, multiculturalism is a social construction of awareness to see the diversity of collective identities in mutual social relations and understand the elements that are incompatible (unequal) in each identity with a group that has the potential to trigger social conflict. Difference as a social fact relates to the moral principle of the need for justice and fairness that protects identity and the capacity to distribute social justice (social justice sharing) in a pluralistic society. The discourse of multiculturalism has had some influence on issues of nationalism. For example, the dominance of the majority group in a country will begin to be challenged based on social facts (diversity and difference). It is because the protection of the cultural existence and identity of minority groups is the main issue in the ideology of multiculturalism.

The process of assimilation can occur if each ethnic or cultural group can live together peacefully. The principle used in multiculturalism is coexistence (Sparinga, 2003:17). It can be imagined that in a pluralistic society that is always haired with chaos and conflict, there is a process of assimilation, in the sense that the conflicts have reached the level of physical conflict. In modern life, Ben Anderson's concept of the nation as an imaginary community framed within territorial boundaries is no longer relevant. Appadurai introduced the term transnational society to express the ambiguous effects of globalisation and transnational structures, which, on the one hand, have preserved the collection of the past and sustained it in the future, while on the other hand, have created opportunities for the emergence of new values beyond the mainstream hate, have given rise to new sources for the legitimacy of a nation's identity beyond territorial boundaries. Nationalism is a cultural construction for political purposes in which the translation of a national entity is created and imagined through cultural practices that generate meaning. Furthermore, this cultural practice is ideologised through the writing of history, ritualised in national day commemorations that mark a national momentum and symbolise national attributes. (Setyaningrum, 2003; 243).

The treatment given or experienced by minority groups has led to considerations for recognising minority group identities, often found in modern societies today. The problem of unification of different identity groups with an emphasis on maintaining cultural diversity (multiculturalism), according to Kymlicka, is a prayer. Firstly, it refers to the unification of various regions and the formation of self-government. In the unification process, there are majority and minority groups. Minority groups are given the name autonomy-government to keep them alive. The second pattern refers to cultural diversity born out of the migration of a group to a particular region where the dominant identity group controls the government debt. Integration is a desirable goal achieved by minority groups according to this pattern (Setyaningrum, 2003; 248).

**Multiculturalism Education**

The multicultural education paradigm is relevant to be applied in multiethnic and multicultural countries, such as Indonesia. Cultural diversity, if managed properly, will be able to form a solid, noble character. Therefore, multicultural education dramatically contributes to the success of character-based education policy. The purpose of character education is the realisation of behavioural values or character of the learning citizens, which includes knowledge, awareness or willingness, and action to implement these multicultural values.

Azra (in Nurhidayati, 2006; 2) defines multicultural education as education for or about cultural diversity in response to demographic and cultural changes in the environment of a particular community or even the world. Franz Magnis Suseno (in Nurhidayati, 2006;3) defines multicultural education as an education that can see humanity as a family with differences and shared ideals. It is the education of fundamental human values for peace, freedom, and solidarity.

The idea and concept of multicultural education originated from the awareness of interculturalism after World War II. This awareness arose because of the increasing plurality in Western countries due to increased migration from newly independent countries to America and Europe. Thus, intercultural, and intergroup education was born in America in the 1940s and 1950s. However, in its development, intercultural education is considered less successful in overcoming conflicts between groups and communities because, in practice, this education is further on the individual than the community. Meanwhile, conflicts on a wide scale occur not at the individual level but at the level of society, which can ultimately disrupt mutual relations between communities, countries, and nations (Nurhidayati, 2006; 3-4).

Multicultural education must be practised in our daily lives. It can be done in schools by incorporating it into the education curve. Another model is that multicultural education is not just revising learning materials but reforming the learning system itself. Affirmative action in the selection of students for the recruitment of publishers in America is one of the strategies to improve structural inequality against small groups. Another example is the "Sekolah Pembaharuan Iskandar Muda" model in Medan, which facilitates the interaction of students from different cultural backgrounds and develops a cross-group foster care programme. Furthermore, various trainings are conducted in schools and the broader community to increase social sensitivity tolerance and reduce intergroup success. Some approaches in the multicultural education process are:

1. No longer limited to equating the view of education with schooling or multicultural education with formal school programmes. A broad view of education as the transmission of culture free of educators from the assumption that the primary responsibility for developing cultural content among learners’ rests solely with them. Instead, it is increasingly responsible because school programmes should be linked to informal learning outside school.
2. Avoiding the view that cultures and ethnic groups are the same. It means that it is no longer necessary to associate Cultures alone with ethnic groups as has been the case. Educators have traditionally associated Cultures only with social groups rather than with several people who continuously and repeatedly engage with each other in one or more activities.
3. In the development of content within a culture that usually requires initiative interaction with people who have needs, it is even more apparent that efforts to support ethnically segregated schools are antithetical to the goals of multicultural education. Maintaining and extending group solidarity hinders socialisation into a new culture. Education for cultural pluralism and multicultural education cannot be logically equated.
4. Multicultural education increases content in several cultures. Which culture to adopt is determined by the situation.
5. Education, both in and out of school) may increase awareness of the content in some cultures. This awareness can be far removed from the concept of dual culture or the dichotomy between indigenous and non-indigenous. Such dichotomies limit individuals to fully expressing cultural diversity. This approach raises awareness of multiculturalism as an average human experience. This awareness implies that multicultural education has the potential to avoid dichotomy and develop a better appreciation through cultural content that exists in learners (Depag RI, 2003).

**Multicultural awareness**

To manage a pluralistic society, more is needed to reflect intellectually. However, it is more about utilising all the opportunities available in a democratic society climate to make the potential of social fun in a plural society as a vehicle to strengthen a shared identity as an Indonesian nation (Setyaningrum, 2003: 258). Therefore, this requires improving transport and social justice distribution mechanisms. An idea of a tolerant society and a sense of togetherness will not be realised if there are still some people who are afraid to express their aspirations.

Multiculturalism is a mindset based on the awareness of reality that is not homogeneous. This awareness stems from epistemological awareness (consciousness) and finally manifests in an ethical consciousness (self-awareness). Awareness of a homogeneous reality will only be helpful if only at the level of knowledge. This awareness is essential to integrate in mindset and action. In a pluralistic society, minority groups are often in a depressed position. The dominance of the majority, who often perform acts of repression, will give birth to small resistance. This resistance in the early stages can be interpreted as an attempt to maintain its existence, especially in a society whose composition is very unbalanced. The attitude taken by the group is a step to get recognition of its existence in society, will zur leben (the will to live). On the other hand, it is no longer critical for the majority group to have its identity and existence recognised. They assert their power over the minimal (will go down).

In practice, when a minority group has succeeded in establishing its existence, it will always be possible to become a majority and change trends. The wille zur leben may become wille zur macht, and new minority groups will emerge. The "birth" and "death" of groups, whether majority or minority, are inevitable in a pluralistic society. To borrow a Buddhist term, this process of reincarnation is sometimes the destiny of the times.

**Multicultural Political Policy**

Disputes in society due to differences in interests between groups can be resolved if there is a political compromise that is mutually beneficial (political mutualism) between the groups. In this compromise, various interests are accommodated, resulting in an agreement for mutual progress. Multiculturalism - accommodates the various interests of various parties in society using the principles of justice. Minority groups will be given the name of the space to keep it alive, while the majority group - Limits its movement so as not to let the power it must oppress small groups. The principle of balance must also be considered in determining the direction and shared wisdom.

When this awareness has been attached to the community, the motto of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika will feel very important. According to Putra (2003;16-17), Bhinneka Tunggal Ika still needs to be finished and used. Bhinneka Tunggal Ika is something abstract, which constantly changes its meaning from time to time, according to the situation and conditions in society. As a motto, it can be very relevant and bind the various elements of the nation that would be scattered without it. At this time, the motto can also be seen as hateful and no longer following the reality that is being experienced and will be faced, so it needs to be replaced with another, more relevant motto. Some may argue that the motto is still relevant, but it must be given a new interpretive name or re-interpreted so that its supporters still feel its relevance and its existence can be maintained.

A tolerant society respects the freedom of each of its members to do things. However, each person's freedom will inevitably face others' freedom. If this freedom is not managed correctly, it will only be an aspect that destroys the society itself. A pluralistic society is an arena for the principle of freedom to become a positive thing or vice versa. Individual and group freedom will be used as justification for certain parties to achieve their goals without respecting the freedom of others.

Instilling awareness of plurality in everyone is a challenging job. Society is a collection of people with various characteristics and personalities. Suppose this awareness has been embedded in everyone if this awareness has reached ethical awareness. In that case, a plural society will be the leading force for realising robust national resilience. With all the differences owned, each community member will use all the potential to achieve its goals without harming other parties. A pluralistic society has more value if appropriately managed than a homogeneous society.

More practically, this awareness can be used as a stop to take actions to prevent conflict in a plural society. These actions will always prioritise the value of justice and respect for human rights. Saafroedin Bahar, taking the example of inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts, said that the most effective way to prevent such conflicts is to provide fair and broad opportunities for citizens to obtain a decent socio-economic life.

There are three standard ways of moral judgements in ethics, especially in the West. These are consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory (John Mohawk, 2001:6). Consequentialism states that judgements about whether an action is morally right made based on judgements about the effects (consequences) of the action. Deontological theory is the view that the obligation to act is based on rights and obligations. In other words, we must act according to rights and obligations. At the same time, the Theory of Goodness says that judgments about morally right actions should be made about the prominence of good character or other natural goals. These three considerations are still causing a stir among moral philosophers. The issues involved in these three ways include the basis for determining what is best, the issue of emphasising short-term or long-term paths, and others.

This is not to say that theories of morality should be ignored because there is no unanimous and final agreement. Each ethical system has its weaknesses. On the contrary, by knowing the weaknesses in these systems, we will be able to use them to achieve a more comprehensive view. In moral philosophy today, there is no longer pure utilitarism (often referred to as Consequentialism) or pure deontology (K. Bertens, 2004: 261).

The differences surrounding the basis of an action so that it can be considered morally right will be discussed elsewhere. This paper will discuss whether a multiculturalist political policy can be morally justified. Multiculturalist political policy here means a policy that pays attention to and respects diversity and - accommodates that diversity becomes a force to achieve universal goals, such as social justice, welfare, peace, and others.

In this case, the state is an institution that has the authority to regulate life in the society it controls. It does not mean that the state (through its sovereign government) is morally entitled to regulate everything; it must be accountable for what it does (the policies adopted). Therefore, every government's political action or policy must have a moral foundation. The approach used here is Deontology Theory, which focuses on treating a person as an end (not just as a tool) and on the principle of justice. Ronald Dworkin says that rights should be treated as trump cards whenever they can be used (John Mohawk, 2001:7). These rights cannot be ignored for any reason.

The problem arises when, for example, a government ignores the rights of minorities in favour of social welfare. For Dworkin, this means disrespecting the dignity of the human being and consequently undermining the idea of equality and justice. Therefore, the principle of justice must be applied to overcome this. Justice, as one of the universal values, can be used to consider whether the action is based on the principle of justice. Many moral philosophers have put forward many formulations of justice throughout time. Immanuel Kant said that justice is the external freedom of each person, which is limited by the same freedom possessed by all other people (Hazlitt, 2003: 315). It means that one's freedom is not 'infinitely free'; the freedom of others will confront everyone’s freedom. In hindsight, Kant's formulation would have left the issue of freedom vs. freedom. People will use this reasoning as justification for their actions. Kant's formulation, when applied to practical life, can be used as justification for the following example: A person has the freedom to kill another person wherever he is if he permits the other person to do what he did. Such an implication is, of course, 'horrifying' and could jeopardise the social life of any society.

The next thing to note is the term freedom. We get one more keyword from Kant's definition of justice: freedom. We can analyse this word in the direction of 'freedom to' and 'freedom from'. It can be formulated that justice is the freedom of individuals to act as they wish and the freedom of individuals from the negative consequences of the actions of others. In the end, cooperation is needed so that everyone’s social freedom will not disrupt the freedom of other individuals. Justice is a set of rules, relationships, and plans that most develop social cooperation based on the will (Hazlitt, 2003: 326).

This social cooperation is an absolute requirement for achieving individual and societal goals. Here, justice and social cooperation function as means for achieving individual and societal goals. Justice is primarily a means to social cooperation and to develop maximum happiness and well-being, not diminishing the importance of justice or social cooperation. For both are necessary and unavoidable means to the desired end. Moreover, therefore, both are valued and appreciated as ends-in-themselves. For means can also be ends, if not the end. Human happiness and well-being cannot be achieved and are difficult to imagine without Social Justice and Cooperation (Hazlitt, 2003:328-329). The emphasis on justice and social cooperation as a means and not an end is intended to counter the misguided thinking that often develops in society. The goal is the happiness and well-being of society at large.

Noting that it is challenging to answer the problems that arise in human morality, it is necessary not only to analyse based on one theory applied purely but also to consider other points of view. If the principle of justice is used, but problems still arise, we must also look at other values. In Western discussions of ethics, the values of autonomy and responsibility are also considered in addition to justice. Autonomy is used in looking at whether, for example, a right is exercised with or without coercion from another party and whether those rights are exercised with a sense of responsibility.

**Conclusion**

A pluralistic society is a complex society that requires more attention to create a conducive atmosphere. As a collection of differences, such a society will be more prone to shocks than a society that is not plural or homogeneous. To overcome this, as a first step, it is necessary to instil an awareness of a plural society, a multiculturalist awareness. That way, a pluralistic society will be an advantage in strengthening national resilience. In addition, political policies based on multicultural awareness can be morally justified based on considerations of justice, autonomy, and responsibility.

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